

Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

**STORM OF PROTEST
CONFRONTS THE G8**
Eyewitness report from Evian

pages 3 & 13

Our rulers are brutal but vulnerable

ARUNDHATI ROY

on the weaknesses of those who
dominate the world

pages 8 & 9

'He has plans for
the use of
chemical and
biological
weapons, which
could be activated
within 45 minutes'

TONY BLAIR

24 September 2002

'I don't think we'll
discover
anything... The
inspectors didn't
find anything, and I
doubt that we will'

DONALD
RUMSFELD

17 April 2003



BLAIR LIED, THEY DIED
GET HIM OUT

OCCUPATION WATCH

The biggest killer

THE BIGGEST weapon of mass destruction in Iraq was inflicted by the US and Britain on its people.

Twelve years of sanctions killed over one million people, according to former UN officials.

And it was Britain and the US that maintained those sanctions when other states on the UN Security Council wanted them lifted.

From July last year \$5.4 billion in humanitarian supplies were held back from the Iraqi people at the insistence of the US and Britain—the UN had approved all of it.

Professor Karol Sikora, head of the World Health Organisation's cancer programme, told journalist John Pilger:

“The excuse that certain drugs can be converted into weapons of mass destruction is ludicrous.

“I even saw wards where dying people were denied painkillers.”

Democracy ditched

PROMISED DEMOCRACY for the people of Iraq is evaporating.

The US's overseer, Paul Bremer, has ditched plans for a 300-plus national conference which was supposed to take place next month.

Instead he is to appoint a 25-30 member advisory council which will leave power firmly in the hands of the US and British forces.

In Basra Britain's attempt to set up an administration collapsed at the weekend.

A committee of 30 Iraqi technocrats walked out when the British army insisted on chairing the body.

Peddling ‘bullshit’

FOREIGN SECRETARY Jack Straw denies he held a secret meeting with his US counterpart Colin Powell where they complained at the lack of evidence of weapons of mass destruction.

But the minutes of the meeting are circulating around the governments of NATO countries.

The pair met in the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York just before Powell gave his performance at the UN waving a mock vial of anthrax.

They agreed to pull some of the most fantastic claims cooked up by Rumsfeld's Pentagon.

Powell had an earlier four-day meeting in which he ripped out large chunks of the document Bush had told him to present saying, “This is bullshit.”

Recycled ‘facts’

BLAIR TOLD parliament two days before the war began that, according to the inspectors, Iraq “had far-reaching plans to weaponise” VX nerve gas.

But he did not say this came from a background document referring to Iraq's policy before 1991.

Bush and Blair claimed Iraq had “stockpiles” of biological weapons. They repeatedly referred to a UN inspectors' estimate that Iraq produced 1.5 tonnes of VX nerve gas in 1990.

In March this year inspectors reported that Iraq's production methods meant that the nerve agent lasted only six to eight weeks.

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FAMILIES

‘Blair should be put on trial’

THE MOTHER of one of the British soldiers killed in Iraq says Tony Blair should be prosecuted as a war criminal if no weapons of mass destruction are found.

Ann Nichol lost her Royal Marine son John Cecil when the helicopter he was travelling in crashed in Kuwait.

She now says of the reason given for the war, “If this turns out to be a lie then Tony Blair should resign.

“He should also be prosecuted under international law as a war criminal.

“If they don't find any weapons of mass destruction then this war has been based on a pack of lies and they have put all of our sons and daughters lives on the line for a lie.”



Lianne Seymour

‘Was Ian's death in vain?’

THE WIDOW of another British soldier killed in the Gulf has also slammed Blair.

Lianne Seymour says, “I have to justify to myself why my husband's not at home with me and at home with his son.

“The fact that there might not be these weapons of mass destruction—I will feel even more misled if that's possible.

“I don't want to think my husband's sacrifice has been in a vain attempt to improve Mr Blair's political career.”



How Blair lied to justify this horror

Tony Blair lied to start a war. Now his stories are unravelling

IT IS not anti-war campaigners who are piling up the evidence that Tony Blair lied to the world, to people in Britain, to parliament and even to his own cabinet.

It is MI6 spy chiefs and army top brass who see the disaster engulfing Iraq and want to show it was Blair who drove through the decision to unleash it.

The CIA is also exposing how it was US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the Pentagon who pushed the war lies.

There is now not the slightest excuse for those Labour MPs (the majority) who voted with Blair for the slaughter.

Clare Short was one of them. She now says she was duped. She says Blair agreed with Bush in September to go to war, come what may. He then doctored documents to falsely claim there was a threat

from weapons of mass destruction.

By Tuesday of this week, 55 days after the fall of Baghdad, no weapons had been found.

Two “mobile biological weapons labs” have turned out not to have the slightest trace of biological agents. They also have canvas sides—making them totally unsuitable for making dangerous germs.

Blair told parliament in September that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction that could be deployed within “45 minutes”.

Blair repeated the “45 minutes” claim as an undisputable fact several times. It was a lie.

A senior government minister told the *Sunday Telegraph*, “It was Blair gilding the lily as usual. He asked for an estimation of how long it could take Saddam to arm those missiles and was told—theoretically—45 minutes. But it was an extrapolation.”

But the claim was inserted into a dossier, presented by Blair in September, on the insistence of Blair's spin doctor,

Alastair Campbell.

A leaked memo last weekend showed Campbell pressured the chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee (which brings together various spy agencies) into endorsing key parts of the dossier.

Even MI6 thought there was no evidence for them.

The 45 minutes claim came from one Iraqi defector who is part of the Iraqi National Congress. This ultra-hawkish outfit is backed by US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the Pentagon.

Junior British defence minister Adam Ingram was forced to admit on Radio 4 last week that there was no corroboration for the claim—making it, according to spy chiefs, worthless.

The CIA also says the information is fake. Vince Cannistraro, former chief of the CIA's counter-terrorism operations says serving officers say claims about weapons were based on “fraudulent” intelligence.

US slaughters wedding guests

US SOLDIERS opened fire on a wedding party in the small town of Samarra in Iraq on Monday of last week.

When the shooting was over, the floor of a truck carrying mainly children to the wedding was awash with blood.

Four people were killed and nine injured.

Although these horrific

incidents are not splashed on the front pages of the papers, this killing and brutality is happening every day in occupied Iraq.

This exposes Tony Blair's other big lie—that the war and occupation has liberated Iraqis.

Armed forces minister Adam Ingram was forced to admit on Radio 4's *Today*

programme last week that Britain has used cluster bombs in built-up areas.

He knew that using the weapons, each of which leaves hundreds of unexploded bomblets that act as mines, in civilian areas, is banned under the Geneva convention.

He wrote a letter, on behalf of Tony Blair, to an anti-landmine charity saying as

much in April.

The scale of the use of this weapon of mass destruction was revealed in a map passed to the *Observer*.

Dated 13 May, it shows unexploded munitions covering large populated areas of Iraq.

Up to 10,000 bomblets could be lying in cities, on farmland and on main roads.

Resistance to the occupiers

IT IS no wonder that Iraqis are beginning to resist the brutality of the US and British occupation.

Six US soldiers were killed last week. Two were killed in a rocket attack on their base in Fallujah.

Mayor Taha Badawi Alwani says Fallujah was never particularly pro Saddam Hussein. But neither do its inhabitants want to see US fighting vehicles.

He estimated that 80 percent of the city's population, frustrated with living conditions, want the

Americans to leave.

Abdul Wahid, head of the city's education department, told US reporters:

“No security. No salaries. Not any services. Our country may be the only one in the world to export petroleum and not have enough gas for our cars. Tell your nation that Bush did nothing to keep his promises.”

On Thursday US occupation forces were driven out of the town of Hit after residents protested at house to house searches.

Riots erupted in the town

of just 20,000 people when US forces continued to invade homes despite earlier peaceful protests calling on them to stop.

The riots were fuelled by fury at worsening living conditions. The price of petrol has risen 20-fold since the occupation began.

Teacher Saleh Dayeh said, “Petrol is the property of the Iraqi people, but now the Americans are stealing it.”

Over 500 Shia Muslims marched in Baghdad on Thursday of last week to protest against the arrest of clerics by US forces.

Socialist Review

monthly magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

YOUNG GIFTED AND BACK

Rob Hoveman writes on the opportunities for the left

£2 from *Socialist Worker* sellers, or Phone 020 7538 3308 E-mail sr@swp.org.uk Write SR, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH

Martin Smith on the state of the trade union movement

Iraqi activists speak out against the occupation

Plus Lindsey German celebrates the re-release of *The Leopard*



Over 100,000 people took part in the protests against the G8 leaders in Evian, France (see page 13)

Picture: Ray Smith

Build a left alternative to this blood stained liar

TONY BLAIR is facing his most profound crisis.

Politicians have been caught lying and cheating many times before. Blair's lies over Iraq are of a different order.

He lied so he could join in killing thousands of Iraqi people.

He lied to drag Britain into a war for US imperialism, a war to help George Bush's regime grab Iraqi oil and demonstrate its terrifying military power.

Peter Mandelson was forced to resign over a home loan.

US president Richard Nixon had to go in the Watergate scandal in 1972 over snooping on his political rivals.

Blair should go, and go now. His supporters say the argument about Iraq's weapons is all in the past. But it is about the future.

US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, echoed by Blair, is turning his sights on Iran and North Korea.

The Bush gang are turning out the same propaganda over Iran as they did over Iraq.

The threat of more bloodshed means the crisis engulfing Blair must not be just a question of parliamentary wrangles and manoeuvres.

Some MPs are calling for a public inquiry into how Blair misled parliament over Iraq's weapons.

That would embarrass him. But it would also mean kicking the issue into the long grass.

Waiting months, or even years, for a few bigwigs to sift the evidence will not satisfy the fury of millions today.

Blair should be answerable for his

crimes now, not next month or next year. There are some who still say we have to unite behind Blair to stop the Tories crawling back into office.

Those who argue that New Labour is the lesser of two evils end up backing a putrid government whose policies are indistinguishable from the Tories.

They will support the government to the end, even as New Labour pursues murderous policies abroad and ruins lives at home.

There is talk of replacing Blair with Gordon Brown in an internal coup.

But neither Brown, nor any of those who stayed in the cabinet, opposed Blair's war lies. None of them offer an alternative to imperialism and neo-liberal policies.

Such an alternative can be built—but it involves two factors.

First, the trade union leaders who say we should stick with Labour must wake up to the fact that defending public services, pay and pensions means confronting the government.

They have to start putting their money where their mouths are.

Secondly, the two million people who marched against the war on 15 February are angrier than ever about what has been done in their name.

A viable left alternative can connect with their mood.

That means socialists getting stuck into every campaign—from opposing the occupation of Iraq to fighting over low pay, campaigning against SATs tests and being there wherever people resist the system.

It means creating a dynamic electoral challenge to Labour that builds on the success of socialist candidates in last month's elections. That needs to happen now in order to fight the next major elections in June next year.

And next month sees a great opportunity to discuss how to deepen the movement against Blair.

Thousands of activists will gather in central London for the Marxism 2003 event (see ad below and page 7).

Punished for telling truth

TONY BLAIR is a liar. Everything left wing Labour MP George Galloway said about the war has been shown to be true.

Yet it is Galloway who has been charged with bringing the Labour Party into disrepute and who has been suspended.

New Labour officials even barred him from attending a party meeting in his own

constituency last week.

Three left wing members of Labour's National Executive Committee were to try to get the suspension overturned when it meets next Tuesday, 10 June.

Galloway was one of the handful of Labour MPs who spoke out during the war and expressed the feelings of millions.

That's why the postal workers'

CWU union conference voted unanimously to defend him and why support will continue to flood in, whether the Labour Party kicks him out or not.

■ **Donations to Galloway's legal defence fund should be made payable to "George Galloway Legal Fund" and sent to Davenport Lyons Solicitors, 1 Old Burlington Street, London W1X 2NL.**

Protest at George Galloway's suspension from the Labour Party

Tuesday 10 June, 9-10am outside Labour's NEC meeting at Labour Party headquarters, Old Queen Street, London SW1 (St James's Park/Westminster ☺)

Imperialism today: is the US unstoppable? **What would socialism be like?** Does the movement need political parties? **How do ideas change?** Is Labour just another Tory party? **Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?** Is racism getting worse? **What makes you working class?** What sort of cities do we want? **What is historical materialism?** Is Chavez the new hope for Latin America? **Can Palestine be free?**

We've all got questions Together we've got answers

Over 200 meetings and forums at Marxism 2003 with speakers including George Galloway MP, Lindsey German, Trevor Ngwane, Fausto Bertinotti, Louise Christian, George Monbiot and Billy Hayes. Free creche and entertainment, and we can even arrange free accommodation. **TIMETABLE AVAILABLE NOW**

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MARXISM2003
hosted by the Socialist Workers Party

comment

How awkward will Tony Woodley be?

TONY BLAIR was dealt another severe blow by trade unionists last Saturday when members of the powerful TGWU union elected Tony Woodley as their new general secretary.

Woodley, who had wide support from the left in the union, got 66,958 votes, 43 percent. He decisively beat Jack Dromey, seen as the most pro-Blair candidate, who came second with 45,136 votes, 29 percent.

Another left wing candidate, Barry Camfield, got 28,346 votes, while Labour Party treasurer Jimmy Elsbly nly got 13,336 votes.

The election saw 21 percent of the union's 850,000 embers vote for the successor to Bill Morris, who is retiring.

Woodley spoke out against the war on Iraq and has called for the reinstatement of suspended Labour MP George alloway.

Woodley also says he is roud to be "a fully paid-up ember of the awkward quad" of left wing trade nion leaders.

On Sunday he declared, Working people think this overment is too wedded to ig business. The awkward quad are a reminder of what abour should be doing, of he values which some union eaders and politicians have orgotten."

The TGWU election reult is clearly a further boost o the left wing in the trade nion movement.

But many TGWU members are also well aware of oodley's limitations.

The TGWU has traditionally been closely linked to he Labour Party, and Woodley has already let it be nown that he will be working more closely with Labour han others in the awkward quad.

And though many TGWU embers are delighted that romeys was humiliated, they remember how Woodley orked with New Labour inister Stephen Byers to versee huge job cuts in the ar industry over recent ears.

Dave Sherry, an active GWU member in Glasgow, old *Socialist Worker*, "This s a smashing result. It is a lear rejection of Blair and lairism in the union.

Space

"Woodley was not a rank nd file candidate, but he was nti-war and the vote is in ine with votes in the other nions.

"Dromey is a Blairite, but e daren't mention it because e knew it would lose him otes.

"I remember campaigning or Bill Morris when Dromey tood against him for general ecretary in 1995. We said all long that the key was buildng on the ground.

"Woodley's victory gives s some space and confience to do that."

Pat Boyle, a longstanding GWU activist from west ondon, told *Socialist Worker*, Downing Street would have anted Dromey to win, but hey kept out and didn't play a ig role.

"Woodley isn't tied in to he Labour machine as losely as some of the others.

"He is more independent nd will criticise the governent at times. But it all really epends on what happens rom below.

"We need to start camaigning for a minimum age of £7 an hour, which oodley says he supports.

"We need to fight for a hortor working week, better

JUDY COX talks to TGWU union members about their newly elected general secretary

safety at work and independent union organisation.

"We need a real political debate in the union."

A worker from the Halewood Jaguar plant on Merseyside told *Socialist Worker*, "I voted for Woodley.

"He was taken round the plant by some shop stewards to put his case.

"People here are angry about what is happening in the plant.

"The bosses are trying to introduce 'corridor hours'.

"This means that you work overtime, but don't get paid for it. You 'bank' the hours and next time there is a drop in orders you take the time off—it's funding our own layoffs.

Shift

"Tony Woodley said he was against all this, but he didn't offer a strategy of what to do about it.

"I think the union has really accepted it and are just going through the motions of 'consultation'."

Brian Todd works at Baker Electrics in Rotherham.

He told *Socialist Worker*, "I voted for Woodley as the more left wing and least Blairite candidate.

"We feel abandoned by New Labour and the unions. I hope now there will be a shift towards the rank and file workers and away from New Labour.

"I want a leader who will stand up on issues like conditions at work and union recognition.

"We are fighting for union recognition here.

"A lot of workers who feel pissed off and ground down will feel cheered up by the result.

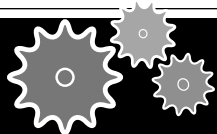
"Woodley was someone Blair didn't like. Dromey didn't want to admit Blair backed him because of the anger of rank and file workers.

"We don't have illusions in Woodley.



Woodley

inside the system



IN THE FRAME



No. 13 REBEKAH WADE

THE *SUN* editor has the same attitude to truth as her friend Blair.

She headed the *News of the World*, which paid £10,000 to entice five asylum seekers into a "plot" to kidnap footballer David Beckham's family in November last year.

The case against the five, in jail for the past six months, was thrown out of court this week.

It's all bill and no rights

THE US Supreme Court has ruled that police interrogation bordering on torture without the suspect knowing their rights does not violate the constitution.

The ruling is on the case of a gravely wounded man interrogated by police while he was in a hospital bed screaming with pain.

Perhaps now it will be OK for the Guantanamo Bay prisoners to be afforded the glorious protection of the US constitution.

Don't talk to us, we're British

THERE ARE to be only three compulsory subjects for post-14 education under new government plans.

Two will be English and maths. But what of the third?

A foreign language, perhaps, in this increasingly globalised world.

No. It's "work and enterprise".

The walls do have ears

MORE SIGNS of collapsing morale at Rupert Murdoch's *Sunday Times*.

Management plans to install CCTV cameras in the newsroom.

The move is supposedly in response to a series of thefts.

But most of those are at night.

Journalists are worried about why the cameras will be on all day and are rumoured to include microphones for recording conversations.

Staff point out that a simpler way to deal with thefts would be to give them drawers and cupboards that can be locked.

Where you can't say 'Stephen Lawrence'

THE MILD-mannered former head of the Commission for Racial Equality, Lord Ouseley, let rip at the government at a race relations conference last month.

He recalled that a government minister had told him the previous week, "Do you know most MPs never meet black people outside Westminster?"

Ouseley continued, "Now we've got David Blunkett calling the shots. His task is to rein in any radical anti-racist strategy by pushing down or removing the name of Stephen Lawrence from the agenda."

He said a top police officer admitted that Stephen Lawrence was never mentioned in



Herman Ouseley

meetings he had with Home Office ministers or officials.

Ouseley said plans to improve "community cohesion" after the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham two



Galloway in his sights

ARMED FORCES minister Adam Ingram has not just been caught out over the illegal use of cluster bombs (see page 2).

He also has a star role in New Labour's crusade against anti-war MP George Galloway.

Galloway is suspended from the Labour Party for supposedly bringing it into disrepute through anti-war comments he made in two

interviews.

One was an obscure broadcast on Abu Dhabi television, which mysteriously managed to receive huge prominence in Britain. Not much of a mystery, according to a source which is far from friendly to Galloway.

Adam Ingram was overheard at a Soho restaurant calling a journalist on the Scottish *Daily Record* to offer a transcript of the Abu Dhabi

years ago were "already in the slow lane, on the way out. It's not a government high priority any more—they have moved on."

He said, "We have a ton of race equality policies, what we haven't got is enforcement. Most employers and public bodies know whatever they do or don't do, no one is likely to find out."

And he recounted a meeting with Jack Straw, when he was home secretary. In answer to complaints about a torrent of anti-asylum stories Straw said, "It's a free press."

When asked why the government did not rebut them as it did when anti-government stories appeared, Straw just shrugged his shoulders.



WHO SAYS?

"Tony Blair reminds me of the late Robert Maxwell, the tycoon publisher. I knew Mr Maxwell for many years before I realised that he had quite a different attitude to truth and falsehood than the rest of us."

ANDREAS WHITTAM SMITH

former *Independent* editor

"It would not be surprising if the parents and families of those who died in Iraq are now asking themselves whether lives had been sacrificed on a false justification."

SIR PETER DE LA BILLIERE

commander of British forces during the first Gulf War

"Some of us, who accepted public and private Whitehall assurances about weapons of mass destruction, today feel rather silly."

MAX HASTINGS
former *Daily Telegraph* and *Evening Standard* editor

"The first hospitals to be built by private enterprise would have been better value for money if they had been financed by the public sector."

STEPHEN BYERS
former New Labour cabinet minister

"Labour risks falling into the same trap as the pigs in Animal Farm, turning into a party of technocrats and managers."

PATRICIA HEWITT

New Labour trade and industry secretary



Do you have a story for inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.



Picture: Douglas Robertson

'We're worth more'

THIS IS a battle for justice. We are demanding that we get proper treatment and are set free from low pay." So said Janet from Greengables nursery, who was one of the 1,000 striking nursery nurses protesting in Edinburgh on Thursday of last week.

Chanting, singing and waving banners they marched to the headquarters of the Scottish local authorities to press their claim for a £4,000 increase and improvements in conditions.

"They never thought we'd strike because we're women who look after children," says a Unison union member from Kings Park nursery in Dalkeith, Midlothian.

"I love looking after the children and I love my job but it's degrading that we are paid so little and it shows that the people at the top of the system regard childcare as a very low priority."

It was the fourth day on strike for 1,000 workers in Edinburgh, Lothians and the Borders. Across Scotland around 5,000 nursery nurses are involved in the action.

This is an important battle that exposes all the empty rhetoric from the Scottish executive and

Nursery nurses surged through the streets of Edinburgh last week as part of their campaign of strikes across Scotland. They are demanding a living wage and recognition for their vital jobs with children

New Labour councils about the importance of children and "social inclusion".

On the one side is the energy and determination of the strikers.

On the other is New Labour's insistence that they will not even consider a change in nursery nurses' pay structure until 2004.

The workers have all struck together across Scotland for two days and are now striking area by area.

Their pay is disgracefully low.

A worker from the Gilmerton child and family centre told *Socialist Worker*, "I read about directors of companies who think that £250,000 is a very basic salary for 12 months ordering people about.

"I've got less than that for over 20 years of looking after children—which is a worthwhile job for society.

"Ever since I was 18 I've voted Labour but I didn't in the last elections.

"Blair has plenty of money for a horrible and unnecessary war in Iraq but nothing for people like us who provide a vital service."

The workers are angry that they have had more and more responsibilities shifted onto them but they are not paid any extra.

"We don't just change nappies, we change lives," says Alice from the Westfield Court nursery school. "The job has changed completely in the last few years and is

now much more like being a teacher.

"We work alongside teachers in the class. If there are 20 children there will be one teacher and one nursery nurse doing essentially the same job. But the teacher will be paid twice as much.

"Good luck to the teachers for what they get but we should be paid much more like them than we are now."

Kath Tyszko from the Walker-

burn nursery near Peebles says, "People think that we just play with children, but we are much more than carers.

"We are educating children in a professional manner and we expect to get pay that reflects the work we do.

"It's quality childcare and preparation for the future."

The last review of nursery nurses' jobs took place as long ago as 1988.

Two years ago the employers said pay would have to be dealt with individually in each of the 32 local councils. When pay claims went in the authorities set up a joint Scottish working party—but then the issue was handed back to a local level.

Shona Wallace, from one of Edinburgh's nurseries, says, "The strike is really solid and you can see people changed by what we have done. We all feel very confident and more sure that we are

right with every day that passes.

"Parents have also been very supportive, even though our strikes are inconvenient for them.

"People are amazed that we get paid so little and know that if we win it will be a sign that childcare is taken seriously."

The union's campaign for better pay has been going on for over two years. It culminated in a 90 percent ballot vote for strikes after the local authorities refused to listen.

On Tuesday of this week around 1,500 nursery nurses in Inverclyde, Ayrshire, Orkney and Shetland started a two-day strike. The union plans further action both regionally and across Scotland.

The only major party which backs the nursery nurses' full claim is the Scottish Socialist Party.

Charlie Kimber

For the latest on the strike see www.unison-scotland.org.uk Send messages of support to Carol Ball c/o Unison Glasgow City Branch, 4th Floor, 18 Albion Street, Glasgow G1 1LH, phone 0141 552 7069, or Joe Di Paola, Unison, 60 Bedford Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3UQ, phone 0870 7777 006.

£200

is the amount per week, before stoppages, a nursery nurse starts on, after two years at college

£280

is the maximum a nursery nurse can earn in a week, even after 20 years service

TEXT MSG SACKINGS

Meet the £40 million boss

"I'm absolutely devastated."

So claimed Mark Langford, the boss of the Amulet Group, which controls the Accident Group.

That's the firm that

disgracefully sacked 2,400 workers by text message last week.

Langford has a nerve to claim he cares about the workers' plight.

He rejected calls for their wages to be paid out of his own pocket, saying he was skint.

The workers were woken at 6am on Thursday of last week by text messages telling them to return all company property to their offices immediately.

At midday another text told them they were

sacked—and wouldn't be paid for their last month's work.

A worker from Birmingham said, "I have bills to pay, children to be responsible for and a landlord to answer to but I am literally penniless. Words cannot sum up how I feel."

The workers were not allowed to join a union. But that didn't stop them taking direct action.

They stormed Accident Group offices and reclaimed company property in lieu of their unpaid wages.

Langford in luxury Russell Bennet, a 27 year old photographer from Sutton Coldfield, described the scene in one office.

"The place was a complete mess. People had been here for hours and taken anything they could get their hands on—computers, coffee machines and even some photocopiers."

The police were called to protect Accident Group offices in Speke, Liverpool, after sacked workers were seen loading

computer equipment and chairs into their cars. Their boss, Mark Langford and his wife have amassed a £40 million fortune. They own a Regency mansion in a 25-acre estate in Cheshire, a villa in Spain and a fleet of luxury cars.

His Amulet Group got profits of £17 million last year and last month was listed as the fifth fastest profit growth company in Britain.

Last Christmas Langford won lavish praise by promising the

NSPCC charity a £6 million donation. Like Langford's workforce, the charity is still waiting for him to pay up.

Jane Calverley, a worker from Liverpool, told *Socialist Worker*, "It was disgusting seeing the sacked workers in Manchester and Liverpool.

"Most people in this region would give the Accident Group workers their full support in taking back what they were owed. Good on 'em."

Judy Cox



Letters@socialistworker.co.uk

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YOUR VIEW

Forging a new political voice

DURING THE recent local council elections, a small group of firefighters determined to contest a limited number of seats.

Their “party”—Firefighters Against Cuts—was hastily organised. They did not expect to win any seats. What they did do was register a protest.

Paul Woolstenholmes, a Suffolk firefighter, and a colleague drew 13.5 percent of the vote. They beat the Lib Dems and cost a Labour councillor his seat.

This is not simply about firefighters’ pay. There is a widespread feeling that public services are being neglected. A party giving expression to that feeling may find that it lays claim to much popular support.

David Howells
by e-mail

Sci-fi debate reloaded

BOB LIGHT’S review of *The Matrix Reloaded* (*Socialist Worker*, 31 May) was way off the mark. By Hollywood standards, the Matrix films are extremely radical. They promote ideas of freedom and rebellion.

I think these films are



Call to rebel?

popular for their message of resistance as much as for their special effects.

Jarvis Ryan
Sydney

Pleasure in Socialism

I RECENTLY had the pleasure of attending a day of political

discussions and debate organised by the Socialist Workers Party in Swansea.

The event, “Socialism in Wales”, was held in the deprived Townhill area.

I hope the SWP will be organising more excellent events like this in areas like Townhill in the future!

Leigh Richards
Townhill

Brutal face of British army

THE appalling slaughter in Congo has led to some calls for British troops to be sent there to keep the peace.

But Masai women in Kenya say that for 20 years British soldiers on training exercises in the



Victim of British soldiers

region have systematically raped them. Not one soldier has ever been investigated.

Kerry Hearne
South London

Should the UN act in Congo?

IN RESPONSE to the article on Congo (*Socialist Worker*, 24 May) I was born in the republic of Rwanda. I witnessed the 1994 genocide when over 800,000 people died.

The scariest thing of all is that it is not over.

The Hutu army is hiding in the forests of Congo, hoping to reclaim what they still assume is theirs.

Much of the intrusion of the US can be very self serving and improper, but it can’t be worse than being ignored by the whole world.

Something needs to be done about Congo, but this time done right, through the UN.

Ammiel Uwoolusanga

Anti-US protesters outside the World Conference Against Racism, South Africa, 2001

Picture: PA Photos/EPA

Bob Geldof is 100 percent wrong on Bush and Africa

BOB GELDOLF is right to attack the European Union’s “pathetic and appalling” response to Africa’s human crisis. But he is totally wrong to praise George Bush’s policies towards the continent.

Bush’s administration is the central actor in making sure that debt repayments are pumped out of Africa.

It is the US dominance of the IMF and World Bank that makes sure African governments are forced to pay around \$15 billion in debt servicing each year.

The result is that 19,000 children die every day.

Bush has also instructed his trade

negotiators to obstruct all efforts to break the chains of patent protection which at present keep the price of AIDS drugs too high for the vast majority in Africa.

Again his decisions murder thousands every day.

It is true that he has announced \$15 billion to fight HIV and AIDS. But most of the money will be channelled through USAID, a government body that pushes US strategic and economic interests.

Bush is the latest in a long line of US presidents who imposed brutal dictatorships in African countries like Congo and backed vicious killers like

Angola’s UNITA movement.

He is no more a friend of Africans than he is of Afghans or Iraqis. Wendy Griffiths
East Anglia

●BOB GELDOLF’S praise for George Bush is surreal. The US is intervening in Africa for the same reasons all the major powers have done.

There is currently a new “Scramble for Africa” under way as the oil multinationals jostle for the right to exploit the massive oil reserves of the west coast.

From Angola to Nigeria

governments are being bribed and bullied to give the rights to US companies.

Since Seattle African governments have tried to hold off massive US pressure to allow the multinationals free rein to sell GM crops. During the recent famines in Zambia a condition of US aid was that the Zambians had to accept genetically modified grain.

George Bush is no saviour of Africa. Geldof has lost the plot and should stop polishing his image off the back of dying children. Simon Hester
North London

Why refugees are forced to flee

ABAS AMINI is an Iranian refugee who went on hunger strike and sewed his eyes, nose and mouth shut in protest against his treatment.

Instead of taking pity on Abas, David Blunkett boasts that his vicious anti-asylum laws are working because the number of people claiming asylum fell recently.

Blunkett insists the brutal treatment of asylum seekers has reduced the number of applications.

This is not true. There has been a dramatic fall in asylum applications in all industrialised countries—with the sole exception of Greece, where welfare is not an option at all!

Asylum applications fall when life improves for people. Numbers applying from Sri Lanka have fallen because of a peace deal there. Numbers from Afghanistan began falling

as soon as the war ended. Elane Heffernan
East London

●THE HOME Office were refused leave to appeal against the decision to grant Abas Amini refugee status. Abas finally ended his hunger strike, and wants to continue raising wider issues about the treatment of asylum seekers.

Two hundred people gathered outside Abas Amini’s house in Nottingham on Wednesday of last week to show their solidarity with him. That afternoon Abas’s solicitor got the decision about the Home Office appeal.

Abas wishes to express his thanks to everybody who has supported his struggle.

John O
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

No confidence in Tory Blair

I AM a member of Leytonstone and Wanstead Labour Party and the east London postal workers’ union branch.

At our general committee meeting on Friday 23 May we passed a resolution of no confidence in Tony Blair.

The resolution said the party no longer has confidence in Tony Blair as prime minister because he led us into a war which cost over 30 British lives and thousands of Iraqi lives without just cause.

The chair of the branch will be writing to other Labour Party branches across London to ask them to do the same.

The branch secretary, David Hayes, said he

voted for the resolution with a heavy heart. He is New Labour but he recently stood in a council by-election in Waltham Forest.

It should have been a safe Labour seat. He found many people apathetic about Labour, and many more were still annoyed about the war.

The Lib Dems won the seat. They had a better position on the war and people think they are actually to the left of Tony Blair.

We feel getting people to vote Labour will be an uphill struggle in the future because the main issue on the doorstep is the war. Labour Party member
Waltham Forest

A Euro vision

SO, PETER Hain has declared, and recanted, that the European elections in 2004 can be a referendum on the Euro constitution and the euro itself.

This is an opportunity that the Socialist Alliance must not pass up.

We need to organise now for a combined left slate of candidates who can provide people with a real alternative to the Little Englander Tories and the “capitalism without criticism” of New Labour and their Lib Dem fan club.

We proved under the first past the post system in Preston that we can win. Under proportional representation we can make a real breakthrough.

A Socialist Alliance victory next year is within our grasp. Roger Smith
Hull

obituary

Anne Howarth

ANNE HOWARTH, friend and comrade, died on 12 May 2003, aged 47.

Anne joined the Socialist Workers Party when she was a student activist at Middlesex Poly. She was an active member throughout the 1980s—in Tottenham, Holloway Road and Hornsea branches when she was in London, and in the late 1980s in Stoke branch.

She moved to Sheffield in 1991, shortly after the birth of her son, Francis.

Anne was a true class fighter, a passionate revolutionary and a gifted

teacher. Her family and friends will miss her extraordinary strength of spirit, her warmth, and her kindness.

She was on good form in recent months, despite her illness. She went to London on the 15 February demo with Francis.

Anne chose a reading from Trotsky’s testament for her funeral, so I’ll give her the last word:

“Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence, and enjoy it to the full.” Jane Leathley

'Marxism will be a feast of politics'

In just four weeks time thousands of people will gather at the Marxism 2003 event in London to join discussions and debates on ideas for changing the world

MARXISM WILL be a key part of the debate about what kind of left alternative we need to challenge capitalism. *Socialist Worker* spoke to some of the trade unionists, students, anti-war campaigners and many others who are coming to Marxism.

"We have an active Stop the War group in north Manchester, and most of us who are most active are coming along as a group," says **Louise Allen**.

Louise teaches asylum seekers in north Manchester and has recently joined the North Manchester Against the War group.

"We want to share with people our experience of organising—successful demos, big meetings, lively stalls which have drawn in a wide range of people.

"So we want to talk to other activists. We also want to take part in the political discussions. In our group there are people from all sorts of different political backgrounds. We want more political understanding and perspective, and to feed this back into our activity.

"I'm being politically active for the first time ever. I only got involved after the war had finished. I thought that we just can't let this happen again.

"I'm particularly interested in the big questions—what a future society will look like, human nature, and what happened in other revolutions, why they went wrong.

"The other issue close to my heart is asylum, because I work with asylum seekers.

"I think today most people are on our side. But we need to know what next and how we get there, and to arm ourselves with ideas."

Julia Clifford is a health worker at Northern General Hospital, Sheffield
"I want to be part of the discussions about the re-evaluation of the traditions of the left.

"In the years of Thatcher and the Tories I thought the Labour Party seemed like a viable alternative.

"But now there are a lot of traditional Labour supporters who feel totally disillusioned with the Labour Party because of the war and because of its treatment of asylum seekers.

"I'm not a member of any group or party, but being involved locally in the Stop the War Coalition has brought me to thinking a lot

about these issues and what kind of alternative we need.

"I work in the health service, and every day I see more and more of the effects of Labour's policies, which means bringing more and more private companies into the NHS.

"I am angered at foundation hospitals. Some call it privatisation by the back door, but it is really privatisation by the front door.

"When this is going on it is difficult to remain on the fence, and I want to be part of the debate about the way forward."

Mike Williams is a bus driver in Bristol

"I'm going to Marxism again this year to get some basic knowledge on Marxist ideas and because it's great to chat with other people about where the movement goes now.

"I went on the two million strong march against the war in London with people who had never been on a demonstration before.

"They still want to be doing something now. They are just not sure where to focus their energies.

"I went to last weekend's protest at the G8 summit in Evian. I'm looking forward to going to meetings at Marxism on where next for the movement. It's exciting poring over the lecture titles."

Pat Morrin is a leading activist in the successful campaign in Birmingham to stop the sell-off of council housing

"There are plenty of fronts to fight on, and a lot of my time has been taken up with Defend Council Housing. They spent nearly £40 million fighting against us, and we beat them.

"It shows what a small number of people can do. At Marxism you see thousands of people listening to speakers like Tariq Ali and George Galloway. It's a feast of politics.

"This year there are quite a few speakers I want to hear, and I'm trying to fit them all in!

"I have been active in politics for 50 years. Marxism is a real rush of adrenalin. When you come back from the event you are full of bounce."

For more information, a full timetable and how to book tickets for Marxism see page 3 or go to www.swp.org.uk/marxism

The anti-capitalist movement has seen a torrent of debate, like here in Florence at the European Social Forum

'This is a workers' university'

Paul Embury is a firefighter in Islington, north London

"Marxism is like a university for the working class.

"We're continually told there is no alternative to the disruptive and corrupt capitalist system under which we live. I would recommend events like Marxism to all of those who are seeking an alternative.

"So many firefighters have been politicised in the recent dispute, and have seen how the government and the system has worked against them.

"Firefighters are workers crying out for an alternative, and hopefully quite a few will come along."

Siv Helen Hesjedal is a student at the University of East Anglia

"I just have to be there. I want to be reminded of the different debates, of who I am, and how to put the arguments to convince others and continue the struggle.

"We need to demonstrate, but we also need to know where next for the movement.

"We face big questions about the future—about the kind of world we live in, about George Bush and the US's plans for

more war.

"I've never been to Marxism before. What I am most looking forward to is getting inspiration, energy and hope by meeting other people who feel the same way about the world as I do."

Bea Belgrave is president of Plymouth and District Trades Council and a housing benefits worker

"Our trades council has supported Marxism for the past six years, and we voted again to send two delegates to this year's event.

"It isn't contentious to send delegates to Marxism because we don't just talk about issues like conditions of service but also quality of life for working people.

"I'm one of the delegates. I've been there twice before. I'm really looking forward to it."

La Bouteldja, a French anarchist in Britain
"I went to the Marxism event for the first time two years ago. It was great, wow, at last something is happening in this country!

"I have been to the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and the European Social Forum.

"Although it is not as broad, Marxism is pretty much like a social forum. There are lots of people from different places. It isn't just an event for British activists.

"There were good political debates. This year I want to go to anything connected with the movement. It isn't just about the seminars. It is a great chance to meet people and network."

Debbie Davies is a journalist in Cambridge

"It will be the first time I have been to Marxism, and I'm looking forward to taking on new ideas and concepts.

"I joined the Socialist Workers Party two months ago. Like many I had been a lifelong Labour voter and had become very disillusioned.

"The war on Iraq magnified that feeling. I went on demonstrations and got active in the Stop the War Coalition, and that started me thinking about things.

"In Cambridge we have been involved in other issues like Globalise Resistance and sent a coach to the London rally for the Palestinians. Through all these things people are becoming really open to new ideas.

"It has given me an opportunity to feel involved and to make a difference."



Siv Helen Hesjedal

Hawwa Almaghrabi is at Leyton Sixth Form College, east London
"I LED a walkout at my sixth form against the war. We started with two of us, and in the end we had 500 people marching through Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone.

"It was fantastic. I want

to bring this feeling to Marxism.

"I'm hoping that I can begin to find answers about the world.

"I am half Palestinian, and the issue of Palestine is a burning one for me.

"I want not only to hear different points of view but also to hear about the

solutions in the Middle East.

"I'm also really looking forward to meeting like-minded people who care about the world."

Matthew Langley is an activist in North Manchester Against the War

"We have built a strong

local anti-war group which has involved a lot of young men and women, including many from Muslim backgrounds, who all have a broad range of ideas.

"We have continued organising after the fall of Baghdad.

"We feel we must make a turn from anti-war activity



Matthew Langley

to also fighting on more general issues.

"As well as fighting the war, we have been fighting racism and the BNP.

"Marxism 2003 is going to be a great opportunity for us.

"It is one of the things we feel we will really learn from."

OUR RULERS ARE BRUTAL BUT THEY ARE VULNERABLE

Acclaimed author and activist **Arundhati Roy** blows apart the myths put forward to justify American imperialism and points to how we can exploit the weaknesses of those who dominate the world



Arundhati Roy

WAY BACK in 1988, on 3 July, the USS *Vincennes*, a missile cruiser stationed in the Persian Gulf, accidentally shot down an Iranian airliner and killed 290 civilian passengers. George Bush the First, who was at the time on his presidential campaign, was asked to comment on the incident. He said quite subtly, "I will never apologise for the United States. I don't care what the facts are."

I don't care what the facts are. What a perfect maxim for the New American Empire. Perhaps a slight variation on the theme would be more apposite—the facts can be whatever we want them to be.

Public support in the US for the war against Iraq was founded on a multi-tiered edifice of falsehood and deceit, coordinated by the US government and faithfully amplified by the corporate media.

Apart from the invented links between Iraq and Al Qaida, we had the manufactured frenzy about Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction. George Bush the Lesser went to the extent of saying it would be "suicidal" for the US not to attack Iraq. It was Frenzy with a Purpose. Bush ushered in an old doctrine in a new bottle: the Doctrine of Pre-emptive Strike, aka The United States Can Do Whatever The Hell It Wants, And That's Official.

The war against Iraq has been fought and won and no Weapons of Mass Destruction have been found. Not even a little one. Perhaps they'll have to be planted before they're discovered. And then, the more troublesome amongst us will need an explanation for why Saddam Hussein didn't use them when his country was being invaded.

There are those who say, so what if Iraq had no chemical and nuclear weapons? So what if there is no Al Qaida connection? So what if Osama Bin Laden hates Saddam Hussein as much as he hates the United States? Bush the Lesser has said Saddam Hussein was a "Homicidal Dictator". And so, the reasoning goes, Iraq needed a "regime change".

Never mind that 40 years ago, the CIA, under President John F Kennedy, helped orchestrate a regime change in Baghdad.

In 1963, after a successful coup, the Ba'ath Party came to power in Iraq. Using lists provided by the CIA, the new Ba'ath regime systematically eliminated hundreds of doctors, teachers, lawyers, and political figures known to be leftists.

In 1979, after factional infighting within the Ba'ath Party, Saddam Hussein became the president of Iraq. In April 1980, while he was massacring Shias, the US National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski declared,

"We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the United States and Iraq."

Washington and London overtly and covertly supported Saddam Hussein. They financed him, equipped him, armed him, and provided him with dual-use materials to manufacture weapons of mass destruction. They supported the eight-year war against Iran and the 1988 gassing of Kurdish people in Halabja, crimes which 14 years later were reheated and served up as reasons to justify invading Iraq.

The point is, if Saddam Hussein was evil enough to merit the most elaborate, openly declared assassination attempt in history (the opening move of Operation Shock and Awe), then surely those who supported him ought at least to be tried for war crimes?

Why aren't the faces of US and UK government officials on the infamous pack of cards of wanted men and women? Because when it comes to Empire, facts don't matter.

Yes, but all that's in the past, we're told. Saddam Hussein is a monster who must be stopped now. And only the US can stop him. It's an effective technique, this use of the urgent morality of the present to obscure the diabolical sins of the past and the malevolent plans for the future. Indonesia, Panama, Nicaragua, Iraq, Afghanistan—the list goes on and on. Right now there are brutal regimes being groomed for the future—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, the Central Asian Republics.

Empire is on the move, and Democracy is its sly new war cry. Democracy, home-delivered to your doorstep by daisy cutters. Death is a small price for people to pay for the privilege of sampling this new product: Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy (bring to a boil, add oil, then bomb).

In these past months, while the world watched, the US invasion and occupation of Iraq was broadcast on live TV. A 7,000 year old civilisation slid into anarchy.

Before the war on Iraq began, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) sent the Pentagon a list of 16 crucial sites to protect. The National Museum was second on that list. Yet the museum was not just looted, it was desecrated.

It was a repository of an ancient cultural heritage. Iraq as we know it today was part of the river valley of Mesopotamia. The civilisation that grew along the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates produced the world's first writing, first calendar, first library, first city and, yes, the world's first democracy.

King Hammurabi of Babylon was the first to codify laws governing the social life of citizens. It was a code in which abandoned

women, prostitutes, slaves and even animals had rights. The Hammurabi code is acknowledged not just as the birth of legality, but the beginning of an understanding of the concept of social justice.

The US government could not have chosen a more inappropriate land in which to stage its illegal war and display its grotesque disregard for justice.

The last building on the ORHA list of 16 sites to be protected was the Ministry of Oil. It was the only one that was given protection. Perhaps the occupying army thought that in Muslim countries lists are read upside down?

The safety and security of Iraqi people was not their business. The security of Iraq's cultural heritage or whatever little remained of its infrastructure was not their business.

But the security and safety of Iraq's oil fields were. Of course they were. The oil fields were "secured" almost before the invasion began.

On 2 May Bush the Lesser launched his 2004 campaign hoping to be finally elected US President.

In what probably constitutes the shortest flight in history, a military jet landed on an aircraft carrier, the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, which was so close to shore that, according to the Associated Press, administration officials acknowledged "positioning the massive ship to provide the best TV angle for Bush's speech, with the sea as his background instead of the San Diego coastline".

President Bush, who never served his term in the military, emerged from the cockpit in fancy dress—a US military bomber jacket, combat boots, flying goggles, helmet. Waving to his cheering troops, he officially proclaimed victory over Iraq. He was careful to say that it was "just one victory in a war on terror...which still goes on".

It was important to avoid making a straightforward victory announcement, because under the Geneva Convention a victorious army is bound by the legal obligations of an occupying force, a responsibility that the Bush administration does not want to burden itself with. Also, closer to the 2004

elections, in order to woo wavering voters, another victory in the "War on Terror" might become necessary. Syria is being fattened for the kill.

The distinction between election campaigns and war, between democracy and oligarchy, seems to be closing fast.

According to a Gallup International poll, in no European country was support for a war carried out "unilaterally by America and its allies" higher than 11 percent. But the governments of England, Italy, Spain, Hungary and other countries of Eastern Europe were praised for disregarding the views of the majority of their people and supporting the illegal invasion. What's it called? New Democracy? (Like Britain's New Labour?)

In stark contrast to the venality displayed by their governments, on 15 February, weeks before the invasion, in the most spectacular display of public morality the world has ever seen, more than ten million people marched against the war on five continents. We were disregarded with utter disdain.

Democracy, the modern world's holy cow, is in crisis. And the crisis is a profound one. Every kind of outrage is being committed in the name of democracy. It has become little more than a hollow word, a pretty shell, emptied of all content or meaning.

It can be whatever you want it to be. Democracy is the Free World's whore, willing to dress up, dress down, willing to satisfy a whole range of taste, available to be used and abused at will.

Modern democracies have been around for long enough for neo-liberal capitalists to learn how to subvert them. They have mastered the technique of infiltrating the instruments of democracy—the "independent" judiciary, the "free" press, the parliament—and moulding them to their purpose.

The project of corporate globalisation has cracked the code. Free elections, a free press and an independent judiciary mean little when the free market has reduced them to commodities on sale to the highest bidder.

Democracy has become Empire's euphemism for neo-liberal capitalism.

The machinery of democracy has been effectively subverted. Politicians, media barons, judges, powerful corporate lobbies and government officials overlap and fit together in an elaborate underhand configuration that completely undermines the lateral arrangement of checks and balances between the constitution, courts of law, parliament, the administration and, perhaps most important of all, the independent media that form the structural basis of a parliamentary democracy. Increasingly, the overlap is neither subtle nor elaborate.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, for instance, has a controlling interest in major Italian newspapers, magazines, television channels and publishing houses.

In the US, Clear Channel Worldwide Incorporated is the largest radio station owner in the country. It runs more than 1,200 channels. Its CEO contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to Bush's election campaign.

It organised pro-war patriotic "Rallies for America" across the country and then sent correspondents to cover them as though they were breaking news.

The era of manufacturing consent has given way to the era of manufacturing news. Soon media newsrooms will drop the pretence and start hiring theatre directors instead of journalists.

As America's showbusiness gets more and more violent and warlike, and America's wars get more and more like showbusiness, some interesting crossovers are taking place.

The designer who built the \$250,000 set in Qatar from which General Tommy Franks staged managed news coverage of Operation Shock and Awe also built sets for Disney, MGM and *Good Morning America*.

It is a cruel irony that the US, which has the most ardent, vociferous defenders of the idea of Free Speech, and (until recently) the most elaborate legislation to protect it, has so circumscribed the space in which that freedom can be expressed.

In a strange, convoluted way, the sound and fury that accompanies the legal and conceptual defence of Free Speech in America serves to mask the process of the rapid erosion of the possibilities of actually exercising that freedom.

America's media empire is controlled by a tiny coterie of people. Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission Michael Powell, the son of Secretary of State Colin Powell, has proposed even further deregulation of the communication industry, which will lead to even greater consolidation.

So here it is—the World's Greatest Democracy, led by a man who was not legally elected. America's Supreme Court gifted him his job. What price have American people paid for this spurious presidency?

In the three years of George Bush the Lesser's term, the American economy has lost more than two million jobs. Outlandish military expenses, corporate welfare and tax giveaways to the rich have created a financial crisis for the US educational system.

According to a survey by the National

Council of State Legislatures, US states cut \$49 billion in public services, health, welfare benefits and education in 2002.

They plan to cut another \$25.7 billion this year. That makes a total of \$75 billion. Bush's initial budget request to Congress to finance the war in Iraq was \$80 billion.

So who's paying for the war? America's poor. Its students, its unemployed, its single mothers, its hospital and home-care patients, its teachers and health workers.

And who's actually fighting the war? Once again, America's poor. The soldiers who are baking in Iraq's desert sun are not the children of the rich.

Only one of all the representatives in the House of Representatives and the Senate has a child fighting in Iraq, America's "volunteer" army in fact depends on a poverty draft of poor whites, blacks, Latinos and Asians looking for a way to earn a living and get an education.

Federal statistics show that African Americans make up 21 percent of the total armed forces and 29 percent of the US army. They count for only 12 percent of the general population.

It's ironic, isn't it—the disproportionately high representation of African Americans in the army and prison? Perhaps we should take a positive view, and look at this as affirmative action at its most effective.

This year, on what would have been Martin Luther King Junior's 74th birthday, President Bush denounced the University of Michigan's affirmative action programme favouring blacks and Latinos.

He called it "divisive", "unfair" and "un-constitutional". The successful effort to keep blacks off the voting rolls in the state of Florida in order that George Bush be elected was of course neither unfair nor unconstitutional.

I don't suppose affirmative action for White Boys From Yale ever is.

So we know who's paying for the war. We know who's fighting it. But who will benefit from it? Who is homing in on the reconstruction contracts estimated to be worth up to one hundred billion dollars?

Could it be America's poor and unemployed and sick? Could it be America's single mothers? Or America's black and Latino minorities?

Operation Iraqi Freedom, George Bush assures us, is about returning Iraqi oil to the Iraqi people. That is, returning Iraqi oil to the Iraqi people via corporate multinationals. Like Bechtel, like Chevron, like Halliburton.

Once again, it is a small, tight circle that connects corporate, military and government

leadership to one another. The promiscuousness, the cross-pollination is outrageous.

Consider this: the Defence Policy Board is a government-appointed group that advises the Pentagon. The Washington-based Centre for Public Integrity found that nine out of the 30 members of the Defence Policy Board are connected to companies that were awarded defence contracts worth \$76 billion between the years 2001 and 2002.

One of them, Jack Sheehan, a retired Marine Corps general, is a senior vice-president at Bechtel, the giant international engineering outfit.

Riley Bechtel, the company chairman, is on the President's Export Council.

Former Secretary of State George Shultz, who is also on the Board of Directors of the Bechtel Group, is the chairman of the advisory board of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq.

When asked by the *New York Times* whether he was concerned about the appearance of a conflict of interest, he said, "I don't know that Bechtel would particularly benefit from it. But if there's work to be done, Bechtel is the type of company that could do it."

Bechtel has been awarded a \$680 million reconstruction contract in Iraq. According to the Centre for Responsive Politics, Bechtel contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to Republican campaign efforts.

Arcing across this subterfuge, dwarfing it by the sheer magnitude of its malevolence, is America's anti-terrorism legislation.

The USA Patriot Act, passed in October 2001, has become the blueprint for similar anti-terrorism bills in countries across the world.

It was passed in the House of Representatives by a majority vote of 337 to 79. According to the *New York Times*, "Many lawmakers said it had been impossible to truly debate or even read the legislation."

The Patriot Act ushers in an era of systemic automated surveillance. It blurs the boundaries between speech and criminal activity creating the space to construe acts of civil disobedience as violating the law.

Hundreds of people are being held indefinitely as "unlawful combatants". (In India, the number is in the thousands. In Israel, 5,000 Palestinians are now being detained.) Non-citizens, of course, have no rights at all. They can simply be "disappeared" like the people of Chile under Washington's old ally, General Pinochet.

More than 1,000 people, many of them Muslim or of Middle Eastern origin, have been detained, some without access to legal representatives.

Apart from paying the actual economic costs of war, American people are paying for these wars of "liberation" with their own freedoms. For the ordinary American, the price of "New Democracy" in other countries is the death of real democracy at home.

Meanwhile, Iraq is being groomed for "liberation". (Or did they mean "liberalisation" all along?)

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that "the Bush administration has drafted sweeping plans to remake Iraq's economy in the US image".

Iraq's constitution is being redrafted—its trade laws, tax laws and intellectual property laws rewritten in order to turn it into an American-style capitalist economy.

The United States Agency for International Development has invited US companies to bid for contracts that range between road building, water systems, textbook distribution and cellphone networks.

Soon after Bush the Second announced that he wanted American farmers to feed the world, Dan Amstutz, a former senior executive of Cargill, the biggest grain exporter in the world, was put in charge of agricultural reconstruction in Iraq.

Kevin Watkins, Oxfam's policy director, said, "Putting Dan Amstutz in charge of agricultural reconstruction in Iraq is like putting Saddam Hussein in the chair of a human rights commission."

The two men who have been shortlisted to run operations for managing Iraqi oil have worked with Shell, BP and Fluor. Fluor is embroiled in a lawsuit by black South African workers who have accused the company of exploiting and brutalising them during the apartheid era. Shell, of course, is well known for its devastation of the Ogoni tribal lands in Nigeria.

Tom Brokaw (one of America's best-known TV anchors) was inadvertently succinct about the process. "One of the things we don't want to do", he said, "is to destroy the infrastructure of Iraq because in a few days we're going to own that country."

Now that the ownership deeds are being settled, Iraq is ready for New Democracy.

So, as Lenin used to ask, What Is To Be Done?

We might as well accept the fact that there is no conventional military force that can successfully challenge the American war machine.

Terrorist strikes only give the US government an opportunity that it is eagerly awaiting to further tighten its stranglehold.

Within days of an attack you can bet that Patriot II would be passed. To argue against

US military aggression by saying that it will increase the possibilities of terrorist strikes is futile.

It's like threatening Brer Rabbit that you'll throw him into the bramble bush. Anyone who has read the documents written by the Project for the New American Century can attest to that.

The government's suppression of the Congressional committee report on 11 September, which found that there was intelligence warning of the strikes that was ignored, also attests to the fact that, for all their posturing, the terrorists and the Bush regime might as well be working as a team.

They both hold people responsible for the actions of their governments. They both believe in the doctrine of collective guilt and collective punishment. Their actions benefit each other greatly.

The US government has already displayed in no uncertain terms the range and extent of its capability for paranoid aggression. In human psychology, paranoid aggression is usually an indicator of nervous insecurity. It could be argued that it's no different in the case of the psychology of nations.

Empire is paranoid because it has a soft underbelly.

Its "homeland" may be defended by border patrols and nuclear weapons, but its economy is strung out across the globe. Its economic outposts are exposed and vulnerable.

Our strategy must be to isolate Empire's working parts and disable them one by one. No target is too small, no victory too insignificant.

We could reverse the idea of the economic sanctions imposed on poor countries by Empire and its allies. We could impose a regime of People's Sanctions on every corporate house that has been awarded with a contract in post-war Iraq, just as activists in this country and around the world targeted institutions of apartheid.

Each one of them should be named, exposed and boycotted. Forced out of business. That could be our response to the Shock and Awe campaign. It would be a great beginning.

Another urgent challenge is to expose the corporate media for the boardroom bulletin that it really is. We need to create a universe of alternative information.

The battle to reclaim democracy is going to be a difficult one. Our freedoms were not granted to us by any governments. They were wrested from them by us. And once we surrender them, the battle to retrieve them is called a revolution.

It is a battle that must range across continents and countries. It must not acknowledge national boundaries but, if it is to succeed, it has to begin here. In America.

The only institution more powerful than the US government is American civil society. The rest of us are subjects of slave nations.

We are by no means powerless, but you have the power of proximity. You have access to the imperial palace and the Emperor's chambers.

Empire's conquests are being carried out in your name, and you have the right to refuse. You could refuse to fight. Refuse to move those missiles from the warehouse to the dock. Refuse to wave that flag. Refuse the victory parade.

Hundreds of thousands of you have survived the relentless propaganda you have been subjected to, and are actively fighting your own government.

In the ultra-patriotic climate that prevails in the United States, that's as brave as any Iraqi or Afghan or Palestinian fighting for his or her homeland.

If you join the battle, not in your hundreds of thousands, but in your millions, you will be greeted joyously by the rest of the world.

And you will see how beautiful it is to be gentle instead of brutal, safe instead of scared. Befriended instead of isolated. Loved instead of hated.

I hate to disagree with your president. Yours is by no means a great nation. But you could be a great people.

History is giving you the chance. Seize the time.

This is an edited version of the lecture "Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy (Buy One, Get One Free)".

It was first presented at the Riverside Church in Harlem, New York, on 13 May 2003, in an event sponsored by the Centre for Economic and Social Rights (www.cesr.org) and the Lannan Foundation (www.lannan.org), which recently awarded Arundhati Roy the 2002 Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom. You can read the full version at www.cesr.org

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Life After Capitalism—part two



Women demonstrating in Milan during the general strike in Italy in February 1974

Change from below

John Molyneux is the second contributor in *Socialist Worker's* new series, Life After Capitalism. John is author of the pamphlet *The Future Socialist Society* and has contributed regularly to *Socialist Worker*. He is a member of the Socialist Workers Party.

WHAT MICHAEL Albert called participatory economics in last week's *Socialist Worker* might more straightforwardly be termed democracy at work.

But whatever we call it, workers' control of production and distribution has to be central to our vision of life after capitalism.

Under the present system all the democratic rights we have won—such as the right to vote, freedom of speech, and so on—are

ultimately undermined by the fact that the world of economics remains completely undemocratic.

MPs can say what they like, ministers can come and go, and new governments can be elected. But real power stays in the same hands—the unelected hands of the banks and big corporations.

Workplace democracy would be simple to organise but revolutionary in its effects.

Instead of managers being appointed by private owners and boards of directors, they would be elected by and responsible to the meetings of the workforce.

Instead of receiving obscene salaries, bonuses and share options they would get the same pay as the workers they represent.

It would slash the horrible inequality that disfigures present society and, as Michael Albert argued, strike a blow at the heart of class divisions—the division between those who control the wealth and those who produce it, those who give the orders and those who do the work.

THIS WOULD be a key mechanism for ensuring we produce goods that people need rather than just what makes the most profit. Decent homes for the masses and tractors for the Third World, not luxury hotels and flash cars for the rich.

It would get rid of the bureaucratic, top-down management of our public services. Schools and hospitals (run by elected teachers, students, doctors, nurses, support staff, etc) would be able to focus on the real needs of pupils and patients, not government-imposed targets and competition.

Above all, it would change our experience of work, the basic experience of our lives. Instead of being bored, alienated and humiliated people we would start to be involved and empowered.

Michael Albert was right to reject the idea that this is “utopian”.

We are conditioned to believe that workplace democracy wouldn't work because ordinary people are not “clever”

enough to run things.

In reality the workforce, especially as a collective, has far more knowledge than the bosses and top management about how to do the actual work.

What bosses are really “expert” at is not how to make things or provide services, but how to control and exploit people.

Insofar as specialist technical and scientific knowledge is needed, the specialists would simply work for the elected worker managers instead of working, as they do at the moment, for the unelected bosses.

However, workplace democracy would face one major problem and it is a problem Albert did not deal with—the state.

By the state I mean the network of institutions—the army, police, prisons, courts and government ministries, and so on—that stands above society and exercises a virtual monopoly of legal force over it.

Apart from the fig leaf of parliament the apparatus of the state is even more authoritarian, hierarchical and undemocratic than the rest of society.

Moreover, it is run by generals, judges, top civil servants and so on. These people are part of the same class that run business, and share the same economic and political values.

The tiny minority of those who came from working class backgrounds get their positions only on the condition that they adopt the priorities and perspectives of the ruling class.

Such a state cannot coexist with widespread workplace democracy for any length of time. Indeed, it will use its considerable power to try to prevent democracy at work even coming into being.

To expect otherwise is really to be utopian—to “ask a tree to fly”, to use Albert's phrase.

If workers' democracy is to survive, the existing capitalist state has to be broken.

Breaking the existing state does not mean a coup by a self appointed minority. It means mass struggles from below by

working people in their millions—crucially through general strikes and workplace occupations.

It means winning over the rank and file of the armed forces and, where possible, of the police to the side of the people, thus paralysing attempts to repress the movement.

In this situation workers' councils can start to develop organically out of the struggle as they have done often before—in Russia in 1905 and 1917, in Germany and Italy after the First World War, Hungary in 1956, Chile in 1972 and Iran in 1979.

This is not because they fit some theoretical blueprint, but because they meet the practical needs of the masses to coordinate their struggles—to decide what is produced and what is not produced, which services run and which don't, how to combine the solidarity of the strike with meeting the basic needs of the people and the movement.

ONCE THEY take on these functions, workers' councils start to become an alternative centre of power which first challenges then deposes the old state.

What makes workers' councils much more democratic than parliament or local councils are the principles of election from collectives and recallability.

Electing representatives from collectives like factories, offices, call centres, hospitals, etc, means that the choice can be made on the basis of democratic discussion and that representatives can be recalled if they break their promises.

Under the present system it is impossible for the electors of a constituency to get together, except at the time appointed from above, to call an MP to account.

With workers' councils all that would be needed to check or remove a delegate would be organising a mass meeting at work.

Some people worry that this system would exclude those who are not in workplaces (pensioners, the unemployed, etc), but actually these people could easily form

associations and be given representation.

In the early stages of the new society there would certainly have to be some form of armed defence against reactionaries, fascists and the like, plus some protection against antisocial behaviour.

At present the army and the police are segregated from the rest of society, and are more or less unaccountable to the mass of people.

Alongside workers' councils could go a workers' militia in which people would serve on a rota basis. Here too the democratic principle of election of officers would apply.

For some people, because of the tragic experience of Stalinism in Russia, Eastern Europe and China, my mention of workers' power conjures up images of a monolithic one-party state.

In reality many different parties and groups can operate within the workers' councils in proportion to their support at the grassroots.

Every issue facing the new society will be debated passionately, and leadership will be able to pass monthly from one party or group to another if opinion changes at the base.

At present we live in a world dominated by the combination of McDonald's and McDonnell-Douglas, General Motors and General Franks.

We say another world is possible. For this to be achieved we need a democratic alternative on both fronts.

This alternative is workers' control of production and workers' political power through workers' councils.

More from John Molyneux

John Molyneux's pamphlet *The Future Socialist Society* is available for £2 from Bookmarks—phone 020 7637 1848. Other titles available by John include *What Do We Mean By Revolution?* (£1.50), *Rembrandt* (£3.99) and *Is Human Nature a Barrier to Socialism?* (£1).



John Molyneux

in my view

Authors go from words to action

THERE'S AN idea that floats around the world of the arts that being engaged in politics is really rather unpleasant.

The *Times Literary Supplement* describes a new collection of socialist poetry, *Red Sky at Night*, edited by Adrian Mitchell and Andy Croft, as "quaint".

What's really going on here is a criticism that says, "I don't like your politics. The art I like hasn't got politics and when my own politics turns up in a piece of art, I don't notice the politics."

A "nature" poem like Wordsworth's "Daffodils" is in reality a sociopolitical plea. The daffodils in question, you may remember, are free and wild.

Late 18th and early 19th century Romantic poets like Wordsworth thought contemplation of free and wild things was part of how they could liberate themselves from the constraints of the old French and American pre-revolutionary societies.

All writing gets involved with social and political matters if only by trying to turn its back on it.

There's a late 19th century novel (*Against Nature*) about a man who retreats into his room creating experiences for himself by the use of clothes, perfume and the like that conjure up journeys and places.

It's totally non-political in the sense that he ends up non-engaged with society, but that, of course, is the point.

He becomes a parody of the withdrawn intellectual thinking that he can avoid contact with the real world whilst trying to bring it into being through the imagination.

Writers for children are often admonished by headlines in the *Daily Mail* if any of us dare to describe the world as it is.

Whole horrible regime

We are accused of destroying children's innocence—as if the bloodthirsty verse about Romans, pirates, highwaymen and old sea dogs that I had to learn in the 1950s was so innocent.

Or for that matter, *The Wind in the Willows*, which recounts the story of how low class stoats and weasels take over a country house only to be violently turfed out when the tough-minded, middle class Badger brings the deposed aristocrat Toad to his senses.

We are living at a time when children's literature has produced some marvellous writers and illustrators who find ways of dealing with the unequal and unjust world around us.

They might do it through the means of the realist novel, picture books, short stories, poetry or whatever. Some of it may be on the level of liberal ideas about the right to be heard, some of it may be more keyed into issues of justice or exploitation.

If you've got very young kids look out for books by Babette Cole, Mary Hoffman and David McKee. For older ones, there's Malorie Blackman, Robert Swindells, Melvyn Burgess, Jacqueline Wilson, Beverley Naidoo, Benjamin Zephaniah, Alan Gibbons, Robert Cormier and many more.

But this new wave of writing doesn't go on in some kind of vacuum. Two big events in the last year have drawn writers for children together to take action—the war on Iraq and the imposition of tests in schools.

On Iraq, people who work in children's literature produced an anti-war petition and letter to the *Guardian* that attracted hundreds of signatures. Now, Mary Hoffman and Rhiannon Lasiter have edited a book of poems and stories against the war for children—*Lines in the Sand*.

On SATs, we've produced a petition in support of the NUT's boycott and now we're building for a boycott ourselves—we're refusing to allow our writing to be used in the tests.

We're taking direct action against the whole horrible regime of government-controlled exams. I've never felt such a strong sense of people wanting to get involved.

Mike Rosen

REVIEWS

Book Mark Curtis details what British intervention round the world has really meant in Web of Deceit

WHAT THE BRITS DID ABROAD

WITH ITS slick cover design, Mark Curtis's book looks like a blockbuster. It deserves to be one.

The story of the terrorist actions carried out by the British state is scarier and more gripping than any thriller.

In *Web of Deceit* Curtis has scoured the historical records and dug deep into Foreign Office files.

His book demonstrates beyond any doubt that Britain is a "rogue state", its leaders enthusiastically helping the US's global death squad bludgeon its way across the world.

The victims of these policies are "unpeople"—they do not count and they are not counted.

This lucid book aims to dispel the big lie that the British government has honourable motives when it intervenes abroad.

Its chapters address different aspects of British foreign policy including recent policy towards Iraq and its complicity with the murder carried out by the Russian state in Chechnya.

One of the most valuable chapters looks at the war in Kosovo. Curtis says, "The claim that the war was fought for humanitarian purposes rests on the belief that the bombing prevented a humanitarian disaster."

"This claim is illusory, since it is clear NATO bombing precipitated, rather than halted, large-scale 'ethnic cleansing'."

He goes through in convincing detail the exaggerated claims made by the British government and others to justify war. "A British government memorandum written after the NATO bombing says that 10,000 people were killed in Kosovo in 1999."

"Foreign secretary Robin Cook confirmed that only 2,000 of those deaths occurred before the bombing."

Other chapters range from a brief



British soldier displays heads of Malayan freedom fighters in the 1950s

history of the Middle East to the slaughter in Indonesia. Curtis also analyses the "special relationship" between the US and Britain.

He shows that British support for wars waged by the US started well before Blair. In 1965 Labour prime minister Harold Wilson said, "We fully support the action of the US in resisting aggression in Vietnam."

"Resisting aggression" meant carpet bombing as well as the widespread use of napalm and chemical poisons.

Perhaps many people are familiar with Britain's recent crimes. But they may not know about earlier events like the dirty war in Malaya 50 years ago, when the British army tortured and murdered peasants to protect British rubber interests.

"To combat an insurgent force of around 3,000-6,000, British forces embarked on a brutal war which involved large-scale bombing, dictatorial police measures and the wholesale 'resettlement' of hundreds of thousands of people."

Several of the measures laid the basis for the tactics used by the US in Vietnam.

Curtis also uncovers a Foreign Office secret file which says, "The war against Malayan bandits is very much a defence of the rubber industry."

The Foreign Office emerges from this book dripping with blood, an ambassador for Britain's arms dealers. But this whole government is corrupt and other departments are no better. Curtis documents how the Department for International Development under Clare Short promoted privatisation as the only path to "development".

This could be a deeply depressing book. But Curtis has hope for the future.

He says, "A popular people's movement has arisen in recent years, misnamed the 'anti-globalisation' movement, conducting demonstrations, rallies and teach-ins all over the world. The movement is united first in opposing the control of the planet by big business and second in seeking a world where justice and rights are respected for all."

And he adds, "As Bush has tried to divide the world into those with us and those against us, the fact is that there are an awful lot of people against 'us', perhaps most people on the planet—justifiably so."

"And, of course, we should be against 'us', as defined by Bush and Blair, if we are concerned to build a better future."

The book also has a very useful chronology of events from 1947 to this year.

Rachel Aldred

Mark Curtis is an author and has worked in the field of international development for ten years. He is speaking about Britain's real role in the world at Marxism 2003 (see page 3). *Web of Deceit* costs £7.99 plus postage from Bookmarks—phone 020 7637 1848.

TV

Humour from beyond the grave

Six Feet Under
Sundays, 10pm, Channel 4,
repeated Saturdays, 10pm, E4

THE SECOND series of the brilliant US comedy-drama *Six Feet Under* has just started on Channel 4.

Created by Alan Ball, the Oscar-winning writer of *American Beauty*, the show revolves around the life of a family, the Fishers, and the funeral home they run. Their "American dream"—a happy, stable family, owning and running their own business—fell apart in the first series.

Now we see how they are coming to terms with the new problems life throws at them.

After the death of her husband, Ruth, the mother of the family, has discovered a new side of her life away from being a wife and mother.

Throughout the new series

she tries to "find herself" in various, often hilarious, ways.

David, the eldest brother, having come out as gay to his family, is now confronting the difficult world of relationships.

He is also trying to reconcile his sexuality with his position as a deacon at his conservative church.

Nate, his brother, has discovered he has a possibly fatal brain condition. He agonises about telling his family and his partner, Brenda,



and about whether to have the extremely risky treatment he needs.

Claire, their teenage sister, is struggling with school and relationships, and trying to work out what she wants to do with her life.

Her character is a million miles away from the precocious *Dawson's Creek* brats who normally represent teen angst on TV.

The Fishers' funeral home is still doing battle with Kroehner's, a huge funeral corporation that wants to take them over.

Every one of the characters is complex, and their reactions as they are forced into situations beyond their control are human and believable.

Six Feet Under is one of the best written and best acted shows on television. Don't miss it.

Phil Whaite

TV

Four to catch if you can

- 1 Secret History: The Charge of the Light Brigade
Saturday, 2.55pm, C4
Looks at the truth behind one of Britain's greatest military disasters.
- 2 The Honorary Consul
Saturday, 12.15am, BBC1
Film version of Graham Greene's novel set in a Latin American dictatorship.
- 3 Dan Cruickshank and the Raiders of the Lost Art
Sunday, 9pm, BBC2
Examines what happened as the Iraqi national museum was looted after US forces occupied Baghdad.
- 4 Blackboards
Saturday, 9.05pm, BBC4
If you've got BBC4 then this modern Iranian film will give you an interesting insight into one of George Bush's next targets.

Compiled by Chris Harman

meetings, forums and events | tel: 020 7538 5821 | e-mail: forums@swp.org.uk

IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE

Big ideas in informal settings

Marxist forums

BARNSELEY
Who benefits from Third World oppression?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Barnsley Library, Shambles St.

BATH
How do we fight fascism?
Sun 15 Jun, 4pm, Percy Community Centre, New King St.

BIRKENHEAD
Palestine: road map to peace or dead end?
Thu 5 Jun, 7.30pm, Oxtan Green Community Centre, Christchurch Rd. *With Mark Krantz.*

BIRMINGHAM HARBOURNE
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Tue 17 Jun, 7.30pm, Open University Centre, Harbourne High St.

BIRMINGHAM KING'S HEATH
Palestine: road map to peace?
Tue 17 Jun, 7.30pm, Dance Workshop, Mosley Rd.

BIRMINGHAM SMALL HEATH
G8, war, famine: is another world possible?
Wed 11 Jun, 7pm, Small Heath Youth and Community Centre, Muntz St.

BOLTON
Confronting the new rulers of the world: the movement after Evian
Tue 17 Jun, 6.30pm, Bolton Town Hall (off Newport St).

BRADFORD
Weapons of mass deception: does the media control our ideas?
Thu 12 Jun, 7pm, Bradford Library, Princes St. *With Helen Salmon.*

BRIGHTON
Palestine: road map to peace or dead end?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm, Phoenix Community Centre, Phoenix Place.

BRISTOL EASTON
Palestine: road map to peace or dead end?
Thu 5 Jun, 7.30pm, Cafe Maitreya, St Mark's Rd.

BURY
Does the media control our ideas?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm, Arts and Crafts Centre, Broad St. *With Chris Bambery.*

CAMBRIDGE
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm, CB2 Internet Cafe, Norfolk St. *With Chris Nineham.*

CANTERBURY
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Thu 5 Jun, 5.30pm, Pascucci's Cafe, High St. *With Julie Waterson.*

CARDIFF
Globalisation and resistance
Wed 11 Jun, 7pm, Glamorgan County Council Staff Club, Westgate St. *With Chris Bambery.*

CHESTERFIELD
Is there an alternative to capitalism?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Assembly Hall, Urban Education Centre, Marketplace.

COLCHESTER
Lenin and the Russian Revolution
Mon 9 Jun, 8pm, RAD Hall, South Way.

COVENTRY
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Central Methodist Hall, town centre.

CRAWLEY
Is fascism still a threat in 2003?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Three Bridges Community Centre, Gales Place.

DERBY
Weapons of mass deception: does the media control our ideas?
Thu 19 Jun, 7pm, Infusion Cafe, Uttoxeter Old Rd.

DUDLEY
Does the movement need political parties?
Wed 11 Jun, 8pm, Claughton Community Centre, Blowers Green.

Posting new records at union conference

SALES OF *Socialist Worker* reached record heights at the CWU post and telecom workers' union conference this week.

Two hundred copies of last week's paper were sold, twice as many as for the equivalent issue last year.

The sales are a reflection of the sea-change in British politics, particularly over the war, during the last 12 months.

They are also based on networks of activists inside the CWU who now see *Socialist Worker* as their paper.

Jason White, a postal worker and conference delegate from Huddersfield,

says, "These sales are unprecedented. It would be brilliant to follow them up and make sure that everyone who bought the paper this week has a chance to buy it every week."

In addition to the sales of *Socialist Worker*, 40 copies of the *Socialist Worker* pamphlet *Israel: The Hijack State* were sold.

The socialist bookshop Bookmarks, which runs a stand at the conference, reports that its sales are running at around twice the level of last year, with £1,000 worth of books sold by Monday evening.

GATESHEAD
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Tue 17 Jun, 7pm, Trinity Centre, High St (opp Woolworths).

HUDDERSFIELD
Lenin and the Russian Revolution
Thu 5 Jun, 7.30pm, Chorlton Public Library.

MANCHESTER LEVENSHULME
Where is the Irish peace process going?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm, Sultan Cafe, Stockport Rd. *With Kevin Orr.*

MANCHESTER RUSHOLME
Confronting the new rulers of the world: the movement after Evian
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Jaffa Restaurant, Wilmslow Rd.

MARGATE
What would a future socialist society look like?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm, Help Centre, Hawley Square.

NEATH
If missiles can cross borders, why can't people?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm, Mocha Jo's Cafe (nr Safeway's fountain). *With John Duff.*

NEWCASTLE HEATON
Malcolm X
Wed 18 Jun, 7pm, Truick Rd Community Centre.

NORWICH
Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm, Owens Cafe Bar, 1 Farmer's Avenue (behind Bell Hotel).

NOTTINGHAM HYSON GREEN
Divide and rule: the politics of racism
Tue 17 Jun, 7pm, Forest Fields Community Centre, Sturton St.

NOTTINGHAM SHERWOOD
Is this the best democracy we can get?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm, Katmando, Mansfield Rd.

OXFORD
Resisting corporate America
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Mitre, High St.

MANCHESTER CHEETHAM HILL
Is revolution possible?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Saffron Restaurant (bottom of Cheetham Hill Rd).

MANCHESTER CHORLTON
Revolution and resistance in the Middle East
Thu 5 Jun, 7.30pm, Chorlton Public Library.

MANCHESTER LEVENSHULME
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PLYMOUTH
Does the movement need political parties?
Mon 9 Jun, 7.30pm, Cafe Marx, upstairs, Voodoo Lounge, Mayflower St.

PRESTON FRENCHWOOD
Does the media control our ideas?
Tue 17 Jun, 7.30pm, Unity Centre, Shepherd St (off Church St).

READING
Palestine: road map or dead end?
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Reading International Solidarity Centre, London Rd.

ROTHERHAM
Weapons of mass deception: does the media control our ideas?
Thu 12 Jun, 7pm, Unity Centre.

ST ALBANS
Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience
Mon 16 Jun, 7.30pm, upstairs, Trinity Church (cnr Victoria St/Beaconsfield Rd).

SCUNTHORPE
Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?
Mon 9 Jun, 7.30pm, Central Community Centre, Lindum St. *With Chris Bambery.*

SHEFFIELD HILLSBOROUGH
Who benefits from Third World oppression?
Thu 5 Jun, 7.30pm, Burton Street Project. *With Chris Nineham.*

SHEFFIELD SHARROW
From people power to workers' power?
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm, Highfields Library, London Rd.

SHEFFIELD WALKLEY
Is fascism still a threat in 2003?
Thu 5 Jun, 7pm, Walkley Library.

SOUTHAMPTON
Palestine: road map to peace or dead end?
Thu 12 Jun, 8pm, Cook House, St Mary's St.

SUTTON COLDFIELD
Road map or dead end: can Palestine be free?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Room 631, Sutton College, Lichfield Rd.

SLOUGH
Palestine: road map to peace or dead end?
Thu 5 Jun, 7.30pm, Slough Quaker, Ragstone Rd.

WATFORD
How do we fight the Nazis?
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, New and Labour Club, Woodford Rd. *With Yuri Prasad.*

YORK
What would socialism be like?
Wed 11 Jun, 8pm, Priory Street Centre.

FORUMS IN LONDON

ACTON
How capitalism underdeveloped Africa
Tue 10 Jun, 7.30pm, West London Trade Union Club, High St.

ALDWYCH
Globalisation, war and resistance: a reportback from Evian
Thu 12 Jun, 6pm, St Clements Building, London School of Economics.

ARCHWAY
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Bonjour Bonsoir, Holloway Rd.

BRICK LANE
Against the G8: a reportback from Evian
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Coffee@Brick Lane, 154 Brick Lane.

BROMLEY
After Evian: is there an alternative to capitalism?
Mon 9 Jun, 7pm, United Reformed Church, Widmore Rd.

CLAPTON
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Gulluoglu Bakery, Lower Clapton Rd.

CROYDON
Human nature: is it to blame for greed and war?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm, Spice Cafe, Surrey St.

DALSTON
Malcolm X
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm, Halkevi Centre, Stoke Newington Rd.

DULWICH
Do all revolutions end in tyranny?
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Goose Green Centre (cnr East Dulwich Rd/Addis Rd).

EAST HAM
Is there an alternative to capitalism?
Thu 19 Jun, 7pm, Froud Centre, Taront Ave (off Romford Rd).

ENFIELD
Is this the best democracy we can get?
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Edmonton Green Leisure Centre, Plevna Rd. *With Keith Flett.*

EUSTON
The US: a history of riots and rebellion
Wed 11 Jun, 7pm, Cafe Muse, Museum St.

FINSBURY PARK
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Gadz Cafe, Clifton Terrace.

HAMMERSMITH
Malcolm X
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm, Cafe Mocha, Shepherd's Bush Rd. *With Kevin Ovenden.*

HIGHBURY
Palestine: road map to peace or dead end?
Thu 19 Jun, 6.30pm, Stingray Cafe, 36 Highbury Park. *With Tom Unterrainer.*

HONOR OAK
Democracy: is this the best we can get?
Thu 12 Jun, 7.30pm, Ackroyd Community Centre, Ackroyd Rd.

HOUNSLOW
Confronting the new rulers of the world: the movement after Evian
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Hounslow Community Centre, Montague Rd.

ILFORD
Divide and rule: why refugees are not to blame
Thu 19 Jun, 7.30pm, Cafe Noire, York Rd (nr Ilford ➡).

KENTISH TOWN
What makes a revolution?
Thu 12 Jun, 6.30pm, Cafe Renoir, Kentish Town Rd.

LADBROKE GROVE
Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience
Tue 10 Jun, 7.30pm, Paddington Arts Centre, Woodfield Rd.

LEWISHAM
Do all revolutions end in tyranny?
Wed 11 Jun, 7pm, Hunkarim Restaurant, Lee High Rd.

STREATHAM
Revolt and resistance in Latin America
Wed 18 Jun, 7.30pm, Boogalu's, Sunny Hill Rd.


TOOTING
Palestine: road map to peace or dead end?
Wed 11 Jun, 7.30pm, Colliers Wood Community Centre, Colliers Wood High St. *With Hassan Mahamdallie.*

TWICKENHAM
Does globalisation lead to starvation?
Thu 12 Jun, 8pm, Etna Community Centre, Rosslyn Rd.

VICTORIA
Report back from Evian
Tue 10 Jun, 6.30pm, King's Arms, 77 Buckingham Palace Rd.

VICTORIA PARK
Lenin: what can we learn from a man who made a revolution?
Mon 16 Jun, 7.30pm, MoJo's Restaurant, 132 Lauriston Rd. *With Martin Empson.*

WILLESDEN
Lenin: a revolutionary for the 21st century
Thu 5 Jun, 7.30pm, Cafe Grafenola, Dudden Hill Lane (nr Dollis Hill ➡).



where

we

stand

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION
The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM
The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

Fill in this form and send it to
PO Box 82, London E3 3LH

Join the socialists

Name

E-mail

Address

Postcode

TU/college/school

Phone

Links

Anti Nazi League
www.anl.org.uk
(020 7924 0333

Globalise Resistance
www.resist.org.uk
(020 7053 2071

Stop the War Coalition
www.stopwar.org.uk
(020 7053 2153/4/5/6

Socialist Alliance
www.socialistalliance.net
(020 7791 3138

Defend Council Housing
www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
(020 7987 9989

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers
www.defend-asylum.org
(07941 566 183

Spark
www.onesolution.org.uk
(07905 998 675

Scottish Socialist Party
www.scottishsocialistparty.org
(0141 221 7714

Local SWP

Barnsley
07881 558 590

Birmingham
07968 551 870

Black Country
07748 653 627

Bradford
07811 403 299

Brighton
07818 027 408

Bristol
07711 718 519

Cambridge
07950 142 464

Camden & Islington
07984 674 582

Cardiff
07815 775 819

Central London
07957 316 094

Chesterfield
07881 558 590

Coventry
07712 047 873

East Anglia
07946 269 024

East London
07753 697 743

Exeter
07939 558 115

Hackney
07788 770 741

Haringey & Enfield
07736 064 045

Home Counties
07905 589 865

Huddersfield
07986 688 842

Kent
07950 610 257

Lancashire East
07968 952 180

Lancashire West
07931 725 633

Leeds & West Yorkshire
07734 265 291

Leicester
07791 102 291

Manchester
07946 413 763

Merseyside
07952 410 718

Norwich
07734 903 378

Nottingham
07766 161 595

Plymouth
07803 620 390

Portsmouth
07801 290 411

Scotland (SW Platform)
07855 023 739

Sheffield
07739 153 472

South East London
07951 737 003

South London
07734 706 256

Southampton
07958 311 922

Swansea
07759 901 392

Thames Valley
07929 618 579

Tyneside
07947 180 994

Waltham Forest
07796 697 271

West London
07958 996 777

York
07984 132 371



The brilliant Globalise Resistance contingent on Sunday's demonstration

Picture: Ray Smith

Storm of protest descends on G8

The anti-capitalist movement burst onto the scene again last weekend. Paul McGarr reports from the Evian summit protests

"TO THE eight who want to rule the world, the world replies—resistance!" The chant was in French, but taken up by people from a dozen or more European countries—and some from Africa, Asia and Latin America too.

All were united in rage against the G8 summit of world leaders on a 100,000-strong protest on the Swiss-French border on Sunday.

George Bush, Tony Blair, French president Chirac and five other of the world's most powerful rulers were meeting in the remote French town of Evian. They window-dressed their summit by inviting leaders from African and Latin American countries to join them.

But they couldn't mask their real agenda.

Bush, Blair and their fellow rulers were discussing how to continue tearing people's lives apart across the world by imposing their neo-liberal policies of privatisation and welfare cuts.

They were determined to continue sucking the life out of the world's poorest people by enforcing murderous debt payments on them.

And they hoped to paper over differences between those like Bush and Blair who launched war on Iraq, and those like France's Chirac whose opposition to war has now turned into rubberstamping the US and British occupation.

The G8 rulers know the anger their wars and economic policies provoke. So they met in a remote town, sealed off from the outside world, defended by tanks, missiles, troops and riot police.

That could not stop a storm of protest descending on their summit. On Sunday impressive demonstrations took place in the adjacent towns of Geneva in Switzerland and Annemasse in France, and smaller protests in Lausanne in Switzerland.

Tens of thousands marched from the centre of Geneva out to the nearby French-Swiss border. Equally huge numbers headed from Annemasse towards the border.

In all over 100,000 people joined a colourful and lively but angry and determined protest. And a few thousand marched in Lausanne.

The anger went wider than the immediate policies of the G8, and today is still about that, but also about the G8, which doesn't do anything about Third World debt".

As on other anti-capitalist protests in the last two years, in cities from Seattle to Genoa and Florence, the vast bulk of protesters were from the area itself.

Wherever they meet, the world's leaders' presence condenses into protest a mood of anger against them and their system.

Sunday's Geneva march was made up mostly of Swiss people, young and old, families with children, trade unionists and pensioners. They were joined by impressive delegations, hundreds, even thousands strong, from across Europe—including a lively and well received 500-strong British contingent.

"I am proud that we are having an event like this here in Geneva and in Switzerland," said Marie-France Jalbert, a local student.

"Me and my friends demonstrated against the war, and today is still about that, but also about the G8, which doesn't do anything about Third World debt".

Press, politicians and police had

tried to whip up panic among local people in Geneva that their town was to be sacked by some invading army. The reality of the feelings of many local people was underlined by the vast numbers of rainbow-coloured "Peace" banners in shops, offices, houses and apartments around the city.

The Annemasse demonstration was made up of people from the surrounding region of eastern France, though they too were joined by impressive international delegations.

At the front of the French demo marched big contingents of striking teachers, who are heading a massive revolt against France's Tory government's attacks on pensions and education (see page 16).

Charles Pirroux, a teacher, said, "I've come because we are fighting our government over education and pensions, and I really hope we can get a general strike over that."

"I am also here because we have to tackle issues like debt and the AIDS crisis in Africa, and also be against Bush and Blair."

As the two marches met at the border there were jubilant scenes, and cheers from the waves of people lining a succession of bridges above the protest route.

The united march pressed across the border, and in a moving moment the strains of the workers' song the Internationale were taken up by many protesters.

Protesters climbed and danced on the roofs of the abandoned border post buildings, creating a brilliant, colourful and festival-like atmosphere.

The protest confounded anyone who believed the worldwide anti-war and anti-capitalist movements have evaporated.

EYEWITNESSES



Violence from cops

THE BRITISH media have focused on vandalism and clashes between police and some protesters at the G8.

They hugely exaggerate the scale of that. The overwhelming majority here protested forcefully but peacefully, and were well received by local people.

There were some incidents. Very small groups of masked people—labelled the "Black Bloc" by some in the media—who had nothing to do with the bulk of protesters engaged in causing pointless damage and deliberately provoked clashes with police.

That gave the police the pretext to use provocations and attack both protesters and local youth.

By far the worst violence was meted out by police.

One British protester, Martin Shaw, was hospitalised after police deliberately cut a rope he was suspended from as he took part in a protest aimed at blocking the road from Geneva to Lausanne.

Police also invaded a campsite at Lausanne, and arrested around 400 people for a time, and they teargassed protesters staging a sit-down protest near Annemasse.

British photographer Guy Smallman, who has often taken pictures for *Socialist Worker*, had to have hospital surgery after he was injured by a police stun grenade.

But over 100,000 people on the main demo made clear their anger at the far greater violence meted out by the world's rulers.

First time protesters

AMONG THOSE from Britain who travelled to join the G8 protests were many young people from the anti-war movement now determined to be part of the resistance to capitalism.

Hannah Marsden, a 19 year old Birmingham student, said, "Before I went to university I hadn't been involved in anything political, but then there was the war. Now we are taking the fight to the G8, and this whole event has just been fantastic."

Kimberley Hamilton, a 16 year old, had travelled for 27 hours on a minibus from Glasgow to join the protests:

"It's the first time I've been to anything like this and it is just incredible, all these people from all over the world, all against war, and Bush, Blair and the G8."

"The war is important, but it's also that they just want to privatise everything and attack workers everywhere, like Blair is doing in Britain."

BUILD UP TO PROTESTS

Discussions took place late into the night

SUNDAY'S march was the culmination of days of protest, debates and meetings.

Protesters set up giant campsites, which attracted large numbers of local young people.

Around the tents and stalls with anti-capitalist and anti-war material, a hum of

discussion went on late into the night.

At 5am on Sunday morning over 500 people from the camp marched right across the city to join other protesters in blockading bridges across the River Rhone in central Geneva.

"A-Anti-Anticapitalista!" was

the chant as people converged on the first bridge.

Soon the five key bridges were in protesters' hands, and remained so for several hours.

The blockades could not, of course, stop the rulers' summit taking place over 20 miles away. But they could

disrupt the hangers-on and bag carriers at the summit.

Previous days had seen other protests and marches of several thousand, including one to the World Trade Organisation headquarters in Geneva.

Meanwhile in both Geneva and

Annemasse conferences, debates on debt, war and much else attracted audiences hundreds strong every day.

A highlight was a 500-strong meeting addressed by anti-war activists from across Europe, including anti-war British MP George Galloway.

In brief

The walls come tumbling down

VER 1,000 brick workers are set to walk out on strike on 9 June in the first of a series of planned one-day strikes.

Hanson Bricks employs the workers. They are members of the TGWU, GMB and Amicus unions and work at 14 plants across England and Wales.

The workers voted by over 90 percent to take strike action after rejecting the company's revised pay offer of 3.45 percent spread over 15 months.

The first offer of 2.7 percent was denounced as "derisory" by the TGWU union.

The workers are incensed that the firm has backtracked on a promise to grant an extra day's annual holiday.

Hanson Brick is one of Britain's biggest brick producers. The company's turnover last year was £15 million.

The second strike is planned for 16 June.

No-confidence vote for bosses

OME 39 workers in the micus union at a Carlisle engineering firm were set to strike on Wednesday of this week.

The workers at Bendall's lodged a vote of no confidence against managing director Norman Addison and finance director Neil Murray last week.

They have already struck in their fight to improve pay, working hours and sick and holiday pay.

"We are not happy with the way things have been run," says Geoff Teale, Amicus shop steward. "If nothing happens soon we could plan to take more action."

Protests beat council's plans

AMPAIGNERS against a planned waste incinerator in Hull are celebrating after a planning inquiry threw out the proposal.

Campaigners fought a long battle against the Labour council, which claimed that the incinerator posed no health risk.

A petition signed by 26,000 people was presented to the council. There were a number of protests.

The pressure caused a split in the Labour-controlled planning committee.

For the benefit of Iraqi people

BENEFIT event was held in Bristol on Friday of last week to help Sami Velioglu, an Iraqi, to buy an ambulance which he will drive over land to deliver vital medical supplies to Iraq.

Arabic drumming and dancing, film, poetry, singing, top local DJ Rob Smith and wonderful food contributed to a fantastic evening that raised over £800.

"Most of us watched with shock and dismay as the Iraqi people had their lives thrown into the utter chaos of looting and the destruction of hospitals, water purification plants and priceless aspects of their cultural heritage," Sami said.

Sami leaves in mid-June. Local people have overwhelmed Sami with support and goodwill.

There have been collections outside supermarkets, local schools, hospitals and medical centres.

A doctor from Blackpool has offered to accompany Sami to Iraq.

Phone messages of support or donations to 07946 400 111.

Journalists

Action defies multinational

JOURNALISTS IN Bradford fighting for better pay and conditions began an indefinite strike last week against their Newsquest bosses.

This is the second indefinite strike to be launched by journalists against Newsquest Media Group, and its owner US media giant Gannett, which made £69 million last year.

A week before journalists in the Newsquest Bradford division began their strike, journalists in Bolton and Bury at Newsquest Lancashire ended their indefinite strike after five weeks.

The journalists are members of the NUJ union. The Bradford dispute is a key battle.

If the journalists win it will be a signal that the union can win back what they lost during management's assault on unions across the print industry in the late 1980s and 1990s.

But if they lose it could encourage companies like Newsquest to dig their heels in and refuse union demands.

One journalist from the Bradford-based *Telegraph and Argus* said, "Management have utter contempt for the staff and treat them like infants with their ridiculous crappy rules."

"Every bit of time off has to be agreed with the editor personally. If you phone in sick you have to speak to a named manager yourself and explain what's wrong with you."

"Putting something on the notice board without permission is a sackable offence."

"There have been more disciplinary hearings here than anywhere else I've worked."

Bosses disciplined mother of the chapel (workplace steward) Sarah Walsh for handing out a leaflet about the strike.

The bosses plan backfired as "The leaflet they tried to ban" became hot property in the Newsquest buildings and staff clamoured to read a copy.

This sort of incident has helped to steel the Bradford journalists' resolve. When bosses offered a derisory two-year deal it was unanimously rejected.

Journalists at the Bradford-based *Telegraph and Argus* daily newspaper are on indefinite strike along with weekly titles—the *Craven Herald*, *Keighley News*, *Ilkley Gazette* and the *Wharfedale Observer*.

Miserly

The indefinite strike action began on Monday of last week and was reaffirmed in a vote on Thursday.

Journalists in the Bradford Newsquest division have already taken 31 days of strike action this year.

They went on strike for half a day last year winning pay increases of up to 14 percent. Their action inspired strikes throughout the NUJ and many chapels (workplace branches) won pay increases from bosses.

At the beginning of the pay dispute there was only one NUJ member at the *Craven Herald*. Eight more have joined.

One journalist from the paper said, "It got to a point where we were all complaining about wages and walking past the people on the picket lines. 'We just couldn't do this

anymore. We had to support them. So we called a meeting with David Coates, the managing director."

"He told us if we went on strike it wouldn't change his point of view and that we didn't need the union. That was it—we all joined the NUJ en masse."

"Coates was the best NUJ recruiter yet."

Newsquest has offered a miserly 2 percent, below inflation pay increase across most of its newspaper titles.

A starting salary on one of the weekly titles for a graduate journalist is £12,000. Fully qualified staff can expect £15,500 regardless of their experience or length of service.

Graduate journalists on the *Telegraph and Argus* start on £13,000 and when fully qualified can get up to £17,000.

Newsquest Bradford made £8.7 million for Gannett last year. The company awarded its "top" director a salary of £500,000 and threw £2 million to nine of its executives to divide among themselves.

The journalists have strong support from NUJ chapels, local people and trade unions throughout the country.

The NUJ should throw its full weight into supporting the strikers and increase solidarity by organising speaking tours. Every NUJ chapel should organise collections.

KATE COYNE
E-mail the Bradford strikers at bradfordnuj@yahoo.co.uk or phone 0161 834 0240. Send donations to Newsquest Bradford NUJ Chapel, c/o NUJ, 22 Swan Street, Manchester M4 5JQ.

Electricians



CORPORATE conscience was switched off once more last week, leaving electricians in Manchester with no alternative but to take industrial action.

Employers Crown House & DAF, who hold the lucrative construction contract for Manchester's Piccadilly Gardens and Court House sites, attempted to end a dispute by sacking skilled members of their workforce.

The electricians, members of the TGWU

union, have been in dispute over serious pay issues. The employers' use of unskilled electricians and serious breaches of health and safety regulations also disgusted them.

The situation came to a head when the site's senior shop steward took the matter to his union authority. The employers had, without consent, taken money out of the workers' pay as a mandatory subscription fee to union Amicus.

Four workers were then

sacked on the grounds of taking the matter to another union. The eight other union workers on the Piccadilly site walked out in a show of solidarity.

The twelve electricians from the site, along with others from around the area, picketed the construction site on Thursday of last week.

The dispute will go to a ballot in the near future. **STEFAN MIKULIN**
Phone messages of support to 07813 456 831.

Civil servants

SOME 288,000 members of the PCS civil servants' union will begin voting for a new national leadership from Friday of this week.

This is a key chance to reclaim the union for its members. The socialist Left Unity group is standing alongside the PCS Democrats group as part of a united Democracy slate to defeat the right wing group that has dominated the union.

Sue Bond, a Democracy slate candidate for vice-president, told *Socialist Worker*, "The national executive elections are the most important opportunity for some years to

see off the gang that has blocked the PCS from becoming a proper union."

"Their attempted coup last year against the elected general secretary Mark Serwotka has opened up many members' eyes."

"There is a mood change going on in the trade union movement. Most members want a union that fights for them. That means fighting the Blair government."

"Its policies on pay and privatisation affect our members and the public services they provide."

"Although the right wing is deeply unpopular we can't take

anything for granted."

"Activists should ensure that all the big civil servant offices locally are leafleted. We have to get the message out."

"We won round one when Mark Serwotka and president Janice Godrich beat the coup. We won round two when members voted for annual elections and conferences."

"Now we have to win round three by kicking out the right wing."

■ **The Left Unity website has resources and guidance for all PCS members who want to maximise the vote. Go to www.voteleftunity.org.uk**

Defend Council Housing

OVER 100 council tenants took part in the Defend Council Housing national conference in Liverpool on Saturday of last week.

They were joined by trade unionists, councillors and MPs to discuss how to step up pressure on the government to stop privatisation and invest in council housing—with no strings attached.

Councillor Ros Gladden, Labour housing spokesperson in Liverpool, opened the conference.

Brian Iddon MP argued it was crazy that tenants in well performing housing departments like his own in Bolton were being blackmailed to accept ALMOs (Arms Length Management Organisations).

Delegates applauded Peter Corte-Massey from Stockport Tenants Federation, who explained how they'd defeated stock transfer in February.

He told other tenants to expect their councils to play dirty:

"They spent a fortune on propaganda but whenever we oppose them they call us 'political'."

Mick Graham, a GMB union national officer, assured tenants of continued trade union support.

Delegates from areas starting campaigns against stock transfer and ALMOs learnt from the experiences of other campaigns in the



Picture: Phil Jones

Delegates were determined to fight for council housing

workshops.

Labour MP Austin Mitchell argued that privatisation makes bad economic sense and is massively unpopular.

Some 115 MPs have signed his motion in parliament, after lobbying from constituents, backing the campaign's demands.

Eighteen months ago Stephen Byers, then secretary of state, encouraged campaigners by agreeing to allow a new "right to borrow" for local councils and promised tenants would get repairs and improvements even if they voted against privatisation.

The conference agreed to continue campaigning on estates wherever councils try and blackmail tenants to

accept stock transfer, PFI or ALMOs while taking the fight to the government to demand direct investment.

In many areas tenants and trade unionists are gearing up to fight a new round of stock transfers and ALMOs.

Delegates agreed to lobby their MPs to sign the motion in parliament and ask all local councillors to sign up to the six demands behind the campaign's recent 1,800-strong lobby of parliament.

ALAN WALTER
A report of the conference will be available next week from PO Box 33519, London E8 4XW, info@defendcouncilhousing.org.uk or www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

Anti-war

Hundreds flock to hear Galloway

SOME 240 people packed into Willesden Library, north west London, on Thursday of last week to hear George Galloway and others slam the occupation of Iraq.

The meeting, called by Brent Stop the War, drew people who had attended protests during the war and newer forces.

Galloway received a tremendous response as he described the rising resistance within Iraq to the occupation, and when he turned his fire on New Labour

and the media forces behind the smear campaign against him.

Those who were not already part of the Stop the War group signed up to be kept in contact. There was a sense that the movement has to continue, opposing the occupation, providing solidarity for the Palestinians and opposing the drive for further wars.

A collection raised over £500. Yvonne Ridley, the anti-war journalist, also spoke alongside Sabah Jawad, an

Iraqi oppositionist who wants an end to the occupation.

There were also speakers from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the International Solidarity Movement which sends international peace activists to support the Palestinian people.

Speakers from the floor emphasised the unity developed by the anti-war movement and the need to build on that and develop it into a political challenge to New Labour.

The new issue of **RedWatch**, the rank and file paper for firefighters and control room staff, is out now.

Order your copy of RedWatch from 07973 521 594 or 07939 021 094.

Diary Upcoming events

Sunday 8 June
● **Jeremy Hardy Versus the Israeli Army**—film showing and question and answer session, 8pm, Bloomsbury Theatre, 15 Gordon Street, London WC1. For tickets phone 020 7388 8822.

Saturday 14 June
● Stop the war on asylum seekers—demonstration and rally, 1pm, All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester. Rally in Peace Gardens.

Saturday 21 June
● Stop the War Coalition conference, 10am-5pm, Hammersmith town hall, King Street, London. For tickets (£5) phone 020 7053 2153/4/5/6.

Saturday 28 June
● Stop the SATs—conference for all parents, governors and teachers. 11.30am-3.30pm, South Camden Community School, Charrington St, London.

● Unity demonstrations against the BNP in Burnley, Broxbourne, Halifax and Tipton. For details phone the Anti Nazi League on 020 7924 0333.

Friday 4-Friday 11 July
● Marxism 2003, central London. A week of debates, forums and meetings organised by the Socialist Workers Party with speakers from around the world.

ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN BY 12 NOON MONDAY

Health workers

Strikers stand up to private firms

DEFIANT HEALTH workers took to the picket lines in north Lincolnshire and in east London last week in an inspiring rebellion against low pay.

The cleaners, cooks, porters and other staff are taking on the private firms that New Labour is letting rip in the NHS. **HAZEL CROFT** spoke to some of the strikers.

TO SUM it up, we've had enough," said Joan, a domestic worker in the accident and emergency department at Scunthorpe.

She was one of the workers in the three hospitals in the North Lincolnshire and Goole NHS trust who went on strike for five days last week.

The workers in Scunthorpe, Grimsby and Goole escalated their action against the huge Carillion firm.

They had thrown out an insulting offer of just £4.75 an hour to be implemented over two years.

Defying their local Unison officials, they voted overwhelmingly to keep up their strike action for £5.02 an hour and equality with NHS staff.

As Joan said on the picket line on Friday of last week, "It's not just he pay, although that's bad enough at £4.30 an hour. It's also always being asked to do extra work and ever getting any thanks."

"One of the worst things this government has done is to bring in private companies into the health service," said a porter who has worked at the hospital for 11 years. "These firms don't have a clue when it comes to healthcare. They certainly don't listen to



On the picket line in east London last week

Picture: Socialist Worker

the workers, they listen to the shareholders. It's all about money."

Bill, like many of the porters at the hospital, is a former steelworker. He said, "I was involved in the steel strike in the early 80s in the days of Maggie Thatcher.

"There was one thing I learned—picket line solidarity. On our own they can break us, but they can't if we are together and united."

At a lunchtime rally Unison branch secretary Chris O'Sullivan read out Carillion's new offer, which came after talks the previous day chaired by the ACAS conciliation service.

It was exactly the same as the old £4.75 an hour offer the workers had already thrown out, except this time the firm had removed a promise of sick pay!

"Bollocks!" "Rubbish!" shouted workers from the floor.

There were cheers for porter and shop steward Joe Koper when he said, "We have no intention of giving up the fight."

And cheers also greeted a porter who read out his poem "The fight goes on", which ended with the lines, "The more Carillion messes us about, the more determined we are to stay out."

There was an equally determined mood among strikers at the Princess of Wales Hospital in Grimsby.

As domestic worker and Unison shop steward Pauline Volley said, "The current pay is just not enough to make ends meet and we're all struggling to live. We are keeping each other going. There's a great feeling of solidarity."

The workers' spirit of defiance spilled over at a rally held in Grimsby last Saturday. Strikers stamped the floor and chanted "All out! All out!" during a discussion on where next for the strikers.

'It's work, home, sleep, and back to work again'

THE SAME sense of anger as seen among domestic workers on the picket line at Whipps Cross Hospital inaltham Forest.

They held two days of strike action against the profiteers who employ them, SS Mediclean.

Workers were furious at their treatment, but also exuberant as for the first time any felt they were taking things into their own hands.

On the picket line there was the deafening sound of air horns tooting support, and strikers cheering, singing and chanting.

"We do all the dirty jobs—leaning toilets, making beds, cleaning under beds, pushing trolleys. We do even and a half hour shifts or just £4.62 an hour," explained one worker.

"Some of us do double shifts. That's 7.30 in the morning until 3pm, a half hour break then another shift. How else can we survive?"

"Work this out," added another cleaner. "£240 for a fortnight's work. Out of that 140 rent, £60 for the child-indeed, £40 left for everything else. And they call that living!"

Abra, a domestic worker, said, "The company look down on you like you are animals. Working for them is breaking my heart. We want dignity and we want respect."

Porter Bob Edwards told *Socialist Worker*, "It's the logic of privatisation. The atmosphere has totally changed at the hospital since the contractors came in.

"Over the last 15 years I've seen things get worse as they pile more work on you.

"The NHS is now run like a private business. The NHS fat cats at the top lap it up, while the people at the bottom get nothing."

"All we want is a fair day's pay," adds porter Fred Philip. "Here people work so hard just to survive, they can't see their families. Yet this government talks as if it is for the family.

"It's like we're not allowed a social life. It's work, home, sleep and back to work again."

The threat of action forced ISS Mediclean to come up with a new offer of £5 an hour and a move towards NHS pay and conditions.

This offer was accepted last week by workers at the

Homerton Hospital. But workers at Whipps Cross want to fight on to win their full demands.

The threat of strikes has also forced another health contractor in east London, Medirest, to offer staff more money.

It has offered workers at Mile End and St Clements hospitals in Tower Hamlets £5.17 an hour, with the promise of limited sick pay and extra holiday.

Unison has suspended the two day strike set for this week while they consult workers on the offer.

All the health strikers have enjoyed tremendous support from the public.

At a lunchtime rally at Whipps Cross last week nurses, radiographers and office staff from the hospital, along with other local workers, lined up to voice their support.

Now that solidarity

needs to be widened into a focus of resistance against low pay and privatisation everywhere.

■ **Send messages of support and donations: Scunthorpe: c/o J Koper, 44 Cliff Garden, Scunthorpe DN15. Make cheques payable to Scunthorpe Health Branch Hardship Fund.**

East London: Unison Office, Mile End Hospital, Bancroft Road, London E1 4DG, or e-mail Jim.Fagan@thpct.nhs.uk Cheques payable to East London Healthworkers Solidarity Fund.



CWU

Showing signs of bitterness

IN EVERY debate at last week's CWU conference there was anger about various aspects of New Labour policies.

This wasn't just shown over the war on Iraq (see page 16).

CWU delegates condemned New Labour for their treatment of the firefighters during their recent pay dispute.

In an emergency motion Gary Heather from Central London branch said, "I am a member of the Labour Party in Islington, north London, and we gave full support to the FBU throughout their strike.

"It was utterly wrong for a Labour government to introduce legislation to do away with collective bargaining. It was an attack on fundamental union rights."

Delegates also expressed their anger at the rise in racism and the increased threat from the British National Party (BNP).

One of those was Stuart Caddy, a postal worker and the Labour leader of Burnley council. He said, "We need to get the BNP out of the workforce. In some places the racists have confidence that other people support them and we have to tackle that. We have a lot of work to do getting rid of the fascists."

Wormed

Delegates spoke of their concern that several BNP members have wormed their way into CWU branches and that the law makes it hard to expel them. Nevertheless there was a strong desire to get them thrown out of the union.

The motion passed about the union's use of the political fund continued the policy of only giving money to the Labour Party and not other organisations, such as the Scottish Socialist Party and the Socialist Alliance.

But the motion's backers certainly gave no endorsement to Blairism.

The Manchester delegate who moved the motion said, "The mood of the country is changing and the Labour government does not reflect our agenda."

"We need to fight our corner and we need more political education for our members."

Seconding the motion, Pete Keenlyside said, "This is not about trying to defend Blair or the New Labour project or many of the policies the government has pursued."

He said the use of the fund was an argument among those who "come to bury Tony Blair, not to praise him" about the best way forward.

Other delegates disagreed. John Johnson from London wanted discussion of more far-reaching changes to the way the fund was used and consideration of opening it up so it could be given to other socialists.

He said, "I have been a member of the Labour Party for over 25 years and was London Region political officer. I believe Labour should be the party of the working class and the trade union movement, but it isn't that at the present time."

"Despite the rhetoric of Tony Blair have we really made such great strides forward? Regrettably I say no."

Another motion, which sought to follow the RMT rail union's policy of targeting money to MPs who back the union's core policies, was only narrowly defeated.

There was frustration among a large section of delegates that the motion to democratised the fund was not heard because of the way the debate had been arranged.

The political fund motions showed general secretary Billy Hayes's determination to stick with Labour—and the damage it causes. Billy has been brilliant over the war. He deserves great credit for the stand he has taken over this and other issues.

But there is a gulf between his denunciation of Blair about international questions and his muted reaction over many domestic issues.

In the political fund debate he was reduced to saying the government was partially listening to the union—even though in the post private companies are being allowed to snatch work away from postal workers and 28,000 job losses are planned.

He added that the union could not target its political fund based on the policies Labour MPs and councillors adopted because "there might be cabinet responsibility" to vote for policies that the CWU opposed or as a councillor "you might have to vote for PFI".

Earlier in the conference he had refused to take action condemning former deputy general secretary Tony Young's attacks on the firefighters.

Delegates had challenged the awarding of honorary membership to past officers of the union because Young was on the Bain review which savaged the firefighters.

Faces

Opposing the motion to award honorary membership, Derek Durkin from Scotland No 2 branch said, "We stood shoulder to shoulder with the FBU, we went on their demos and stood on the picket lines. Now we throw that back in their faces by honouring Tony Young."

Young was saved only by the intervention of Billy Hayes, who argued that it would be unfair to the good people on the list if the honorary memberships did not go through.

Many in the rank and file feel the union's leadership is not doing nearly enough to fight for better pay, oppose job losses and stop privatisation. This is causing unrest, evidenced by the recent 99 percent vote for action over London weighting in an unofficial ballot.

Discussions around these issues were set for later in the week in the separate businesses where the union organises.

Crucial debates were planned among postal workers—particularly over the issue of pay and in deliveries where the executive was proposing acceptance of a deal which will see 12,000 job losses.

CHARLIE KIMBER

■ **Full report on the rest of conference and the postal section conferences next week. CWU delegates who want to put their views on the conference should e-mail reports@socialistworker.co.uk**

Socialist Worker

CWU union slams Blair's war and backs Galloway

France: revolt against welfare reform

Can strikes shake Tory government?

TUESDAY SAW another huge show of strength by French workers in their fight with the country's Tory government.

Strikers shut down much of the country. But the overnment was gambling on some union leaders now olding back from the all-out action which could bring orkers victory.

The immediate issue at take is the government's de-termination to push through a avage attack on workers' ension rights.

The government wants to ake people work more years nd pay more to get poorer ensions.

It is also pushing a wide-anging assault on education hich would pave the way or a two-tier system and rivatisation.

Behind this the real issue as become the future of the overnment.

It is a battle about which ide can impose its will—the overnment and the bosses it eprents, or workers.

Tuesday's strike demonstrated that workers certainly ave the power to humble the overnment.

Rail services across rance and bus, tram and etro systems in many cities ere shut as workers walked ut.

Some strikers had de-lared their intention to stay ut indefinitely.

Teachers and other edu-ation workers were out gain in massive numbers.

Many of them have been n all-out strike for weeks ow.

They have become the d-iving force behind the wider evolt against the government.

Most flights within or to rance were cancelled as air raffic controllers and airline nd airport workers struck on uesday.

Many post, electricity, as, telecom and council

by **PAUL McGARR**

workers as well as civil servants, dockers, TV and radio workers and others also struck—with some declaring that they could stay out for more than one day.

Impressive demonstra-tions took place on Tuesday with workers marching in scores of towns.

Union leaders were meet-ing on Tuesday night to decide on the next step.

The government is fighting hard. It knows the stakes are very high.

It was playing the old bosses' game of divide and rule to prevent workers' full power being unleashed.

Attack

On Monday the govern-ment met education union leaders and proposed that part of its attack on education could be postponed from this month until September.

Union leaders welcomed the announcement, but the mood from below meant they went ahead with Tuesday's strike.

The government wants to defuse the education revolt now, win the pensions battle, and come back to attack edu-cation in September.

The government was trying the same approach elsewhere.

It had succeeded in getting leaders of one major union federation, the CFDT, to



Workers have struck and protested against the government's attacks

Picture: Sion Touhig

accept the core of the pensions plan—though many CFDT members have rebelled over this and joined the strikes and demonstrations.

The government was trying to pull rail workers out of the movement by promis-ing that their special pension deal would not be affected, and has tried the same ap-proach with Parisian bus and

metro workers.

In each case minority unions have been persuaded to lift their strike calls, though unions with majority support maintained the call to action.

For union leaders to allow the government to divide the revolt and blunt the scale of strikes, risks disaster.

France's Tories are using

the method which Margaret Thatcher used in Britain in the 1980s to keep fights against groups such as miners, print workers, dockers, and rail workers separated.

Whether French workers can prevent the government achieving this depends on en-suring the pressure from below is such that union lead-ers dare not go along with the

government's manoeuvres.

The instinct, and track record, of those leaders is to avoid the kind of full-scale challenge to the government now needed to win.

If workers turn the deep desire for united and general strike action into reality they could win a victory that would haunt governments and rulers everywhere.

OPPOSITION TO the war in Iraq goes deep into the union movement.

The tone was set this week at the CWU union conference for postal and telecoms work-ers in Bournemouth.

In his opening address general secretary Billy Hayes said, "We can't buy into Bush's plans for the world.

"I was proud to address the biggest demonstration in British history on 15 Febru-ary and see so many of our members calling for peace."

A debate on Iraq and Palestine saw deep hostility to the recent war. Emma For-rest from Manchester said, "The invasion of Iraq showed the emptiness of Labour's 'ethical foreign policy'.

"It saw indiscriminate bombing and, now, occupa-tion. It was a war about US interests and oil."

Bob Cullen from Ox-fordshire said, "Now it's ob-vious there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

"One of the biggest rea-sons for terrorism is the in-justice to the Palestinians. Israel is an expansionist, ag-gressive government."

The main conference guest speaker was Chris Smith MP. He said, "Several thousand Iraqi civilians have been killed and cluster bombs litter the landscape. No prime minister, this was not the right thing to do."

Delegates voted unani-mously to back anti-war MP George Galloway.

Misled

The motion said, "This conference condemns the suspension of George Gal-loway MP from the Labour Party. The policies advocated by Galloway which have prompted his suspension—opposition to the war on Iraq—are entirely in accord with those of the CWU.

"We therefore call for the immediate lifting of his sus-pension from the party."

Central London delegate Paul Moore said, "This is about basic democratic rights and about a man who spoke out over an issue that concerned millions.

"It is said that he dis-credited the Labour Party. It is government ministers who misled the British people over Iraq who have discredited the party."

John Brown, the regional secretary for Scotland, said that the three CWU branches affiliated to Galloway's Glas-gow Kelvin constituency all supported him:

"Why has he been sus-pended now? Unless the sus-pension is lifted he will not be able to stand for the new constituency which will result from a reorganisation of his present constituency.

"If we don't have debate, we don't have the right to say we're a democratic party.

"George has always been helpful to us and this is sending a message that we will repay that support."

Every CWU branch backed the motion. It is a sign of how the anger over the war and New Labour's undemocratic regime is growing.

■For more on the conference turn to page 15.

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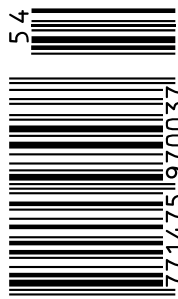
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